



SERMONS:

BY THE LATE
REV R. L. HARPER,
SOUTH CAROLINA CONFERENCE, M. E. CHURCH, SOUTH.



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DEDICATION.

TO THE

MEMBERS OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA CONFERENCE,

THIS VOLUME OF SERMONS IS

RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED,

*In behalf of the Author, who lived and died in the work of the
Itinerant Ministry.*

EDITOR'S NOTE.

THIS volume is a memorial of one who labored faithfully and successfully in the vineyard of the Lord. A native of England, removed to Canada in early life, and transferred to South Carolina in his twenty-first year, he readily adapted himself to his surroundings, and became a true pastor of the flock, entering into their sorrows and sharing their prosperity.

These sermons are evidently the productions of a studious man, one who never presumed to bring unbeatened oil into the sanctuary. His themes are eminently practical, and he deals with them in a spirit of earnestness and of intense desire for the salvation of his hearers. The thoughtful reader will find much to interest him in these pages, and the student of the Bible will find his faith and knowledge of sacred things confirmed and enlarged. This preacher was a workman that rightly divided the word of God, giving to each his portion in due season.

W. P. HARRISON,
Book Editor,

NASHVILLE, August, 1885;

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SERMONS BY R. L. HARPER.

SERMON I.

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

“Come, see the place where the Lord lay.” (Matt. xxviii. 6.)

SUCH was the invitation which an angel extended to the women who first sought our Lord’s sepulcher on the morning of his resurrection. The Sabbath over, they had left as soon as possible for the place of his interment, intending to anoint his body and complete the hasty obsequies of the preceding Friday. Sad, no doubt, were their reflections as, silent and unattended, they passed through the streets of the still slumbering metropolis. They thought of that dear Form that had so lately passed over those same streets on his way to the shame and anguish of the cross. They thought of him as he paused to administer consolation to themselves and others when, in the fullness of their grief, they “bewailed and lamented him.” They thought of him in his last agony, enduring not only the pangs of a cruel death, but the mockery of the multitude, and, far worse than all, the hiding of his Father’s face. “It was yet dark,” and there was neither sight nor sound to disturb the deep reverie into which they had fallen. Without the wall, their gait quickened, and but a few steps brought them to the garden, where they had sat and watched the eve following the burial. Entering quietly and reverently, they stole along its winding pathway, wondering if they would

be able to remove the stone from the mouth of the sepulcher. They had proceeded but a short distance when they were startled by "a great earthquake." Recovering from their trepidation, they pressed forward once more, and soon found themselves in the vicinity of the sepulcher. To their surprise and embarrassment, it was surrounded by Roman soldiers. A single glance, however, apprised them that something unusual was transpiring. In the dim light of the breaking dawn the faces of the guard looked weird and ghastly, and they trembled as though smitten by some dread palsy. A nearer approach disclosed the cause of their alarm. The stone had been rolled away, and on it there sat an angel, "his countenance like lightning, and his raiment white as snow." Overcome with terror, the women, like the guard, stood mute and motionless, their gaze riveted on the mysterious apparition. For them, however, there was a swift relief. With a smile that told of the deepest rapture and shed the divinest peace, and in tones instinct with tenderest love, the angel said unto them: "Fear not ye; for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here; for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay."

Such was the consolation offered, such the invitation extended by a member of the celestial community on that memorable occasion. And, my brethren, that invitation has not lost its meaning, nor that consolation its power, though more than eighteen centuries have fled since it fell from those seraph lips. To-day, what is it but the belief that "Christ died, yea, rather is risen again," that sustains us under our multiplied afflictions? and among the many invitations that are ever sounding in our ears, we know of none more sweet, none more welcome, than that of our text: "Come, see the place where the Lord lay." Let us turn aside, then, and view the sepulcher of our risen

Lord. We may not be able to journey thither personally, and even if we could we should find that the hand of time had been before us and obliterated every mark by which we might identify the sacred locality. Still, in imagination, we can gather around it, and for the confirmation of our faith and the rekindling of our hope consider the evidence and the glorious results of the resurrection of our Lord. Consider,

I. The Reality of His Resurrection.

The importance of this consideration will appear from a single quotation from St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians: "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." What, then, are the evidences afforded us of the reality of this important and wonderful event?

We stand in thought surveying the sepulcher of our Lord. We enter and gaze around us, but discover no trace of its former occupant save the linen which enshrouded him and the napkin which had been bound about his gashed and gory brow. The Master is missing; and to our mute and sorrowful appeal the answer is given, "He is risen, as he said."

Now, the reality of our Lord's resurrection must necessarily involve the reality of his death. And just here doubt would obtrude the question, Did our Lord actually die? Was he undoubtedly deceased when deposited in the grave? Happily, there is sufficient evidence to substantiate this important circumstance. As though anticipating such misgiving, the four evangelists have carefully recorded the death of our Lord. St. Matthew informs us that "he cried with a loud voice, and yielded up the ghost." St. Mark affirms that "he cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost." St. Luke relates that "when Jesus had cried with

a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit. And having said thus, he gave up the ghost." And St. John states that "he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost." In their several narratives they inform us, moreover, that the crucifixion was public; that vast multitudes were present to witness the awful tragedy, among whom were many who from evil motives were deeply interested in the death of our Lord; that the soldiers to whom his execution had been committed "brake not his legs," as they did those of the two thieves, in order to hasten the pangs of dissolution; that one of the band, however, to prevent any subsequent suspicion attaching to his death, "with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water;" and that Pilate, when solicited to deliver the body for interment, delayed doing so until he had been assured by the officer on duty that our Lord was actually dead.

Therefore, according to the concurrent testimony of the four evangelists, our Lord was pronounced dead by the civil authorities when delivered to Joseph for entombment. Admitting the fact of his death, another question, however, instantly occurs: May not the body have been surreptitiously removed during the interval between his burial and professed resurrection? Happily, the evangelists are able to demonstrate the exact opposite of this. We learn that the enemies of our Lord, in their anxiety to prevent any semblance of a resurrection, adopted a precaution which precluded the possibility of any tampering with his sepulcher. Immediately after his burial, they remembered that he had more than once predicted his resurrection. They had themselves heard him explicitly affirm, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." And quite likely the traitor apostle, in one of his interviews, had informed them of a similar saying he had recently uttered

in the presence of his disciples. To defeat any imposition that might be intended, they requested Pilate to use his proconsular authority to protect the sepulcher "until the third day." Their request was complied with. Sixty armed men were placed at their disposal. And with these they went and secured the sepulcher, for additional security sealing it with the imperial seal—that seal to break which illegally was to incur the penalty of death. The whole case was thus retained in their own hands. And yet, notwithstanding all their care, on the morning of the third day the body was discovered to be missing. Accepting as trustworthy the statement of the evangelists, we must see that it was absolutely impossible for the body to have been removed by human agency. Indeed, the guard, to account for the disappearance of our Lord, circulated the story that "his disciples came by night and stole him away, while they slept." But such palpable inconsistency and falsehood appear upon the face of this story that the evangelists content themselves by simply recording it, without any effort to refute it. Weigh the facts, my brethren. The guard consisted of at least sixty men, inured to warfare, and armed with javelin and spear. The disciples were few in number, civilians, and thoroughly disheartened by the death of their beloved Master. The season was one in which the moon shone brightly during the greater portion of the night, thus rendering it impossible for any one to approach the sepulcher unobserved. That the soldiers slept is preposterous. It was death to Roman sentinels to be found asleep on duty. More plausible is the assertion of the evangelists, that they were bribed by the rulers to propagate a falsehood. Indeed, no bribe would have been sufficient to induce them to acknowledge such delinquency had not their safety been previously assured. We learn that such assurance had been given them. Their story,

however, contains its own refutation. The soldiers were either awake or asleep; if awake, where was their courage to permit a few unarmed and timid peasants to remove the body? and if asleep, how came they to know that the disciples had removed it? The absurd story seems to have been abandoned as hastily as it was fabricated. When subsequently Peter and John, and shortly after the whole college of apostles, were brought before the Jewish sanhedrim, and censured for the doctrine they proclaimed, the soldiers' report was never once alluded to, nor was a solitary witness produced to disprove their assertion.

Our Lord's miraculous disappearance from the place of his entombment must therefore be conceded. Still, to confirm our faith, we may put the question, Was he seen alive after his resurrection? Happily, the evangelists can satisfy this inquiry also. We can merely enumerate the various manifestations they record. Mary Magdalene was the first to whom he showed himself. A few moments later he appeared to Salome and the other Mary as they were hastening to Jerusalem to communicate what they had seen and heard. Soon after, he appeared to Simon—no doubt assuring the recreant but now penitent apostle of his forgiveness. The afternoon of the same day he accompanied two of his disciples to Emmaus, where “he was known of them in breaking of bread.” That night he appeared to ten of the apostles in an upper chamber at Jerusalem. A week later he was seen of them again, and with them on this occasion was the doubting Thomas. Again he appeared to seven of them by the margin of Tiberias. Then “he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once,” on a hill-side in Galilee. “After that he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.” Finally, having met them at Jerusalem, and authorized the publication of his gospel throughout the bounds of the habitable globe, “he led them out as far as

to Bethany; and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven."

Surely, my brethren, if the joint testimony of the evangelists may be received, these appearances are sufficient to dispel any doubt that may linger in our minds as to the verity of our Lord's resurrection. But here a question intervenes, What proof have we of the veracity of these writers? how know we that their narratives are not "cunningly devised fables?" And here, blessed be God, we are not left to grope in the mazes of uncertainty. In support of the truthfulness of the evangelists, we call attention to the wonderful consistency and intrinsic excellence of their writings. They relate the story of our Lord in a manner so variant as to make it clear that they wrote independently of each other, and yet so agreeing in the leading facts, and so easily capable of reconciliation in those minute circumstances in which some discrepancy at first sight appears, that their testimony in all its parts carries with it the air of honesty and truth. Then, what purity distinguishes their writings, and those also of their fellow-witnesses! Take the Gospels, the Acts, the Epistles, and is there aught therein that panders to vice? aught that tends to sully the beauty or to lower the authority of virtue? Would not earth be a very Eden were the morality of the New Testament universally practiced? For impure, dishonest men to compose such a book would be as great a miracle as any it records. Consider what sufferings were endured by those who published the resurrection. What was there to tempt them to forge and propagate a falsehood? Was social ostracism, was poverty, was imprisonment, was scourging, was death—and that in its most fearful and ignominious form—so desirable that they could cheerfully court it in behalf of what they knew to be a lie?

Consider the remarkable results which accompanied and followed the deliverance of their testimony. We speak not of miracles—how the lame walked, the dumb sung, and the dead lived. Oracles were silenced, idols abolished, temples razed, philosophies superseded, laws changed, a new era introduced, and a new religion enthroned in the affections of the world. In further proof of the fidelity of the sacred writers, we have the existence of Christianity at the present hour. What opposition has it not encountered? what combinations has it not overcome? The Jew hated it, and the Roman derided it; but it has outlived the magnificent temple of the one and hung its bright banner over the proud capitol of the other. Popery cast it to the flames, and deemed it dissolved in ashes; and lo, to-day, the dead phenix lives! Islam waved his dread scimiter, and thought to give its life-blood to the breeze; but while the Mohammedian crescent is steadily declining, Christianity, like the sun, maintains her course with ever-increasing brilliancy and power. No weapon that has been formed against her has prospered. Again and again have her ramparts been assailed, but in vain. Founded upon the Rock of ages—the rock of a risen Redeemer—the gates of hell have not prevailed against her.

Then, as we stand by the sepulcher of our Lord, pondering the “many infallible proofs” before us, we feel certified that “he is not here, but risen, as he said.” Yes, “the God of peace brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep.” Angels have escorted him to the skies. The everlasting gates have swung open at his touch. The empyrean has rung with halleluiyahs in his praise. The Father has welcomed him to his side, invested him with all authority, given him a name that is above every name, and a kingdom that cannot be destroyed. Consider,

II. The Results of His Resurrection.

These are many, and infinitely important. However, we can only dwell on the most conspicuous.

If Christ is risen, we must perceive that his claims to Messiahship are thereby authenticated. For ages the human race had been led to anticipate a Deliverer who should remedy the evils which oppressed it, and restore it to the lost image and felicity of God. Prophets had portrayed the person of this Deliverer, announced his advent, sketched the successive steps of his career, and filled the future with the forth-puttings of his power. A number of types, too, had been given, each breathing some utterance respecting his character and mission, and constituting a part of the complex criteria by which he might hereafter be identified. It is obvious that in his case there was to be an intermingling of sunshine and shadow. The path to glory would conduct him through the valley of humiliation and distress. He was to be despised and rejected of men; forsaken of God and afflicted; subjected to a most violent and ignominious death. Still, he was not to see corruption; he was to burst the barriers of the tomb; to divide the spoil with the strong; and to see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied. Now, Jesus Christ fulfilled each of these predictions. As the crowning circumstance, however, it was to his resurrection that he appealed as furnishing decisive evidence of his claims to be the Messiah of the world. To the Pharisees he had said: "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas; for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." If his pretensions were unfounded, if he were only, as had been intimated, a deceiver of the people, God would certainly refuse to sanction such imposture by the fulfill-

ment of so remarkable a prediction. As we have seen, the prediction was fulfilled; and he, my brethren, whom we acknowledge in our worship, was thus avouched to be the Hope of Israel and the Desire of all nations.

If Christ is risen, we must perceive, moreover, that the sufficiency of his atonement is thereby established. Sin, entering our world, entailed on man the maledictions of Heaven's violated law. The fearful alternative arose of securing a substitute who would expiate the penalty, or else enduring a hell whose every pang would be embittered by a thousand recollections and the fuel of whose flame would be exhaustless and eternal. A surety was found. In the counsels of the Godhead, the Son as Messiah engaged to assume this relation and to suffer in our stead. Of his priestly office and propitiatory projects early intimations were given. At first faint as the twilight that precedes the dawn, they gather brightness as the years roll on, until at last every cloud is lifted, and "the Sun of righteousness arises with healing in his wings." The Messiah should be "cut off, but not for himself." He should "make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness." He should be "wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace be upon him, and we with his stripes be healed." Publicly and privately, by implication and by positive assertion, our Lord proclaimed himself the priest of prophecy. "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." "I am the Good Shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." Intentionally, "he suffered, the just for the unjust; that he might bring us to God." He "died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again." His resurrection, therefore, in attesting his Messiahship, moreover attests the validity of his sacerdotal

service. It is at once the proof and the pledge of the sufficiency of his sacrifice—the efficacy of his intercession. It is a visible expression and embodiment of the Divine acceptance and approval thereof. It assures us that the way of life has been opened, that the streams of salvation now flow in their fullness, that “whosoever will may come and take of the water of life freely.” Thank God for the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Thank God that he has “gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet.” Vain would have been his gospel without the accompanying seal of his resurrection. “If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.” His resurrection is the anchor which alone gives security to his treasure-freighted promise of eternal life. Thank God that we have it—“an anchor sure and steadfast, entering into that within the veil.” Yes, “the Forerunner is for us entered.” “The Lord is risen indeed.” Vainly the king of terrors waved his scepter over the Captain of our salvation, and in vain did the grave boast of its mighty captive. As though he had been only reposing in soft slumber, he suddenly opened his eyes and stood up; and immediately the seal and the great stone gave way, and our Saviour came forth, masterful and victorious, to proclaim “redemption through his blood, according to the riches of his grace.”

If Christ is risen, we must perceive that our future resurrection is thereby secured. Jesus Christ, in his redemptive capacity, superseded Adam as the federal head and representative of mankind. That Adam acted not exclusively for himself, but for the race, is the uniform and unequivocal testimony of Scripture. “By the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation.” “As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” In his legal relation to posterity, Adam is expressly denomi-

nated "the figure of him that was to come." Christ came, then, a "Second Adam." He too is a public person; he too is a covenant head. Alike in the relation they sustain, they widely differ, however, in the consummation they achieve. "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." It is in the latter particular that we are now more immediately interested. The death of Adam was the death of human nature; the resurrection of Christ is the resurrection of the same. In a deeper sense than that of being its sublime author is Christ "the resurrection and the life." His resurrection is virtually the resurrection of the race. He is now so indissolubly united to us by identity of nature that our resurrection as inevitably follows as the putting forth of leaves the swelling of the sap, and the gushing forth of waters the opening of the imprisoned fountain. "Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth: they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." "The resurrection of life!" Precious assurance to Christian believers! A balm for bereavement—an invigorating cordial for coming death. The ancient Greek, sitting solitary in his home at Athens, bereaved of his children, might well ask the question, "Shall I ever meet again the children of my love?" or, standing beside the grave, might well ask, "O grave, tell me thy secret;" or, "O death, answer me, What hast thou done with the sons and daughters of my house, who gladdened my heart in the twilight hours? I see the flowers and birds returning with the spring, but no returning years bring back the treasures of my heart. Tell me thy secret, death." But vain the question; the moaning of the

cypress and the yew alone broke upon his strained and eager ear; a pall of impenetrable darkness hung over the horizon of his hopes, and naught arose beyond but the mournful prospect of absolute and unending nothingness. Christ alone brings comfort to the troubled soul; Christ alone flings sunlight on the darkness of the tomb. Philosophy may indeed, in halcyon hours, predict a resurrection; Christ alone can prove it. Philosophy may be bold enough to guess it; Christ alone can guarantee it. “Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept.”

We bid adieu for the present to the sepulcher of our Lord. May our visit inspire us with adoring wonder, gratitude, and love! Dear to us should be the spot where once reposed our risen Redeemer. Often should we journey there in thought; often should we stand and meditate on the marvels it unfolds. It is fragrant with the memory of a love that passeth knowledge; it is steeped in the light of a day that shall know no end. It is the birthplace of faith and hope. It is the fountain of enduring peace. It is the earnest of the fulfillment of the promise made unto the fathers: “O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction.”

“Come, see the place where the *Lord lay.*”

SERMON II.

THE APOSTLE'S DILEMMA.

“I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.” (Phil. i. 23, 24.)

ST. PAUL is here in a dilemma. It would seem that the option had been given him of speedy dissolution or of prolonged life. He hesitates which to accept. The scales are about even when he begins to write the words of our text; but while penning them a sudden preponderance is felt on the side of this life. And in the next verse, escaping partly from his embarrassment, he is able at least to express the conviction that, notwithstanding his present perplexity, his ultimate decision will be “to abide in the flesh.”

Now, we think this temporary suspense and final determination of the apostle at this juncture of his life one of the noblest exhibitions of self-sacrificing love. And we think you will agree with us in this view of it when we shall have considered at length what impelled him on the one hand to desire immediate dissolution, and then what constrained him on the other hand to relinquish this desire. Consider,

I. What impelled him on the one hand to desire immediate dissolution.

It was not a spirit of misanthropy. Save one—and he our blessed Lord and Saviour—none ever loved humanity with a deeper, broader, purer love than St. Paul. Nor was it any morbid disgust with life as the scene of baffled hopes and wounded sensibilities and imperfect knowledge. The apostle looked on life as we may look on some winter landscape, and see in somber fields and leafless forests the count-

less germs of future loveliness. "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment," he exclaimed in writing to the Corinthians, "worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Nor was he laboring under any despondency such as overcame Elijah when beneath the juniper, and led him to sigh: "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life." The apostle was ever buoyant in the midst of tribulation—his spirit like some white bird which far out at sea swims fearlessly upon the crested waves. What, then, impelled him to desire immediate dissolution? It was something eminently worthy the apostle. It was that he might be with Christ. "I am in a strait betwixt two," he says, "having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better."

Let us endeavor to estimate the strength of this impulsion.

1. To be with Christ was to be with the person whom he loved above all others.

In the affections of his people, Jesus is supreme. Not to love him above all else is to forfeit our claim to be numbered with his followers. His own words are: "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me."

If ever there was a man in whose heart Jesus Christ was supreme, that man was St. Paul. The strength of love is to be measured by what it endures in behalf of its object. Contemplate the life of the apostle; set before you his toils and sufferings; and remembering that it was the love of Christ which constrained him to undergo with patience and cheerfulness his manifold afflictions, you must perceive that his attachment was of no ordinary character. Love craves communion with its object. The deeper the love the greater will be the desire for the society of the loved one. Separation may be necessary, but where love is strong and true it

is only rendered durable by the prospect of reunion. And the longer the separation and the nearer the time for reunion, the more will the heart swell with delight, and the more will it long to overleap the dividing space. Look at those children, now peering through the window, then rushing to the door-way, straining their gaze to catch the first glimpse of the loved father who has been for years in the war, and is now said to be almost home. Look at that wife who has voyaged thousands of miles across the deep to rejoin her husband from whom she has been sundered for years, and see how her frame trembles and her eyes glisten as she is told that by to-morrow morning the vessel will have cast anchor in the desired haven. These illustrations may help us to enter into the feelings of St. Paul when he had the choice of immediate departure to the presence of Christ. Loving Christ as he did with all the ardor of his affectionate spirit, longing to be with him as he would with an ever-increasing intensity of desire, how strongly impelled would he be to choose death rather than life when he knew that by so doing every obstructing barrier would speedily be removed, and he be privileged with near and open vision to "see the King in his beauty!"

2. To be with Christ was not only to be with the person whom he loved above all others, but to be in the place which he preferred above all others.

Christ is in heaven. He is enthroned in pomp and power at the right-hand of the Father. It was there he was beheld by Stephen at the close of his memorable address before the Jewish sanhedrim. "He, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right-hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right-hand of God."

While God is everywhere, it seems that there is one place

in particular where he manifests his presence with peculiar glory, and where he lavishes his richest blessings. It is of this place that the psalmist speaks when he says: "In thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right-hand there are pleasures for evermore." Where it is situated it is in vain to conjecture. St. Paul, speaking of Christ, says, "He is made higher than the heavens;" and again, in contrasting his humiliation and exaltation, he says, "He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens." Suns, systems, constellations, galaxies, appear to have been left behind in that upward flight to "the high and holy place." From the figurative descriptions given of it by the inspired writers, we feel sure that it must be a place of surpassing magnificence and beauty. Fair is our own globe at times when basking in the splendor of morning, or decked in the mild loveliness of evening. It has spots where we would fain linger, entranced with the blending charms of mountains and lakes, woods and meadows, rocks and streams. But doubtless the most resplendent scenery of earth but dimly portrays the countless physical attractions of the celestial world—the country, the metropolis of the Great King. Of the enjoyments of heaven, in their variety and sweetness, we have only a very imperfect conception. Negations enter largely into our knowledge of its blessedness. We know that there will be no sin there. We know that the foot of the tempter will never defile that sanctuary; that no unholy thought or impure feeling will ever vex or disturb its inhabitants. We know that there will be no sorrow there; that tears will never stain the faces of the glorified; that no groan of pain or sigh of sadness will ever mar the glad harmonies of the place. We know that there will be no death in heaven; a grave will never be seen in that "land of the living." We will no more be burdened with bodily infirmities; we will never have occa-

sion to complain of mental weakness. But the happiness of heaven will not be simply negative. There will be communicated a vast and ever-increasing amount of positive good. Of course, the superlative pleasure will be the vision of Christ. "The smile of the Lord is the feast of the soul." But added to this there will be other pleasures. There will be the companionship of angels and just men made perfect. How delightful to be associated with the purest and most exalted intelligences in the universe! Then, there are honors to be worn, offices to be filled, employments to be engaged in. The saints are to wear crowns; they are to be kings and priests unto God; and they are to serve him day and night in his temple. While much connected with heavenly enjoyments remains unrevealed, we feel confident that every capacity of the soul for bliss will be satisfied, that no want or desire will be overlooked, that the felicity experienced will be perfect and uninterrupted, and as exhaustless as eternity.

As the scene of perpetual and unalloyed happiness, as well as the home of the risen Redeemer, heaven is anticipated by Christians with the most ardent and tender desire. It is their portion by inheritance as "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ." They "know that if the earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, they have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." And "in this they groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with their house which is from heaven."

If ever there was one who might naturally desire heaven with a more intense longing than another, that person was St. Paul. For he had not only heard of heaven as we have, but he had actually seen it. In his Second Epistle to the Corinthians he informs us that on one occasion—whether in the body or out of it he could not tell, he was "caught up into paradise [the third heaven], and heard unspeakable

words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." O the ineffable picture that must ever thereafter have been present to the mind of the apostle! We sit down sometimes and weep for joy over the description of heaven given us by St. John; and yet we know that he saw only types, dim shadows of realities. And if, while pondering the splendid imagery of the seer of Patmos, we are often led to exclaim, "O that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away and be at rest," can we not conceive how inexpressible at times would this desire be in the case of him who had been permitted, without a veil, to survey the glory and to behold the blessedness of heaven? With the option before him of speedy dissolution or of continued life, how strong would be the impulse to choose death rather than life, when he knew that by so doing he would quickly pass to that celestial country upon whose joys he had already gazed with unutterable rapture!

My brethren, you are now perhaps better prepared to estimate the strength of that impulsion which led the apostle to desire immediate dissolution. When you remember that he was a prisoner at Rome, that he was advanced in years, that he was feeble from incessant labors and manifold afflictions, that earth gave no prospect of relief from toil or even of suspense from suffering, and when you bear in mind that to him death was "to depart, and to be with Christ"—to be with the person whom he loved above all others, and to be in the place which he preferred above all others—I think that you must perceive that the wish to die must have been almost overwhelming.

It appears, however, that even when his desire for immediate dissolution most absorbed him, there was always something which placed him "in a strait betwixt two." And this will lead us to consider,

II. What constrained him, on the other hand, to relinquish his desire.

It was not a doubt as to its propriety; for, as we have already intimated, it would seem that he had received a divine communication giving him the option of a speedy departure or of a prolonged stay. It is true the apostle does not expressly assert this, but with that delicacy peculiar to himself he employs language which leads us to infer it: “What I shall *choose* I wot not.” Nor was his dilemma due to any lingering fondness for this world, such as we may imagine Moses to have felt when, standing on the top of Pisgah, he beheld the rushing Jordan, the verdant plain of Sharon, the palm-groves of Gennesaret, and the distant summits of snow-crowned Lebanon. In sincerity and in truth he could aver: “Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.” Nor was he withheld from choosing death by any apprehension of a want of meetness for heaven and its beatific joys. Without presumption and in all humility he could say: “I am now ready to be offered; I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith.” What, then, constrained him? If we examine the text we find that it was simply the work of the ministry. “I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.”

It will materially heighten our conception of the apostle’s character if we consider the apparent weakness of this constraint.

1. Observe, then, the work of the ministry involved the most fearful responsibility.

What is every true minister but “the messenger of the Lord of hosts?” What is he but an ambassador from the court of heaven, charged with a message of overture and warning to the sons of men? The covenant of the Lord is with him—the covenant of “life and peace;” and it is his

duty to proclaim its terms and to urge its acceptance on all who may come within the reach of his instrumentality. As in the sight of God, and in view of coming judgment, he is to "preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine." Awful will be his punishment if found unfaithful. "Son of man," are the words of God to Ezekiel, "I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand." Is it to be wondered at that men in all ages have shrunk from this office? Can we marvel that of those who have undertaken it some have felt oppressed almost beyond measure by a sense of their responsibility? It is said of Bernard, of France, that once after preaching in the schools of philosophy at Paris, he spent a whole night in anguish and sobs, fearing that God had forsaken him, because none were converted. It is said of John Welsh that he would pray seven or eight hours a day, and when his wife, in her solicitude for his health, would remonstrate with him, he would say: "O woman, I have three thousand souls to answer for! and I know not how it is with many of them." But fearful as is the responsibility of the ordinary minister, how much more so was that of St. Paul! Responsibility is in proportion to our gifts and the extent of our sphere of labor. How numerous were his gifts, how vast was his sphere of labor! Elevated by Christ to the apostleship, and anointed with a special baptism of the Holy Ghost, he had been intrusted with the most important enterprise of the early Church. Starting from Antioch, and proceeding through Asia Minor to Europe, he was to plant the Christian religion among the

numerous and heterogeneous inhabitants of the western section of the Roman Empire. To this end he was to be unceasingly aggressive; he was to boldly confront every form of evil which presented itself to his observation; he was to launch his invectives against idolatry and superstition, and vice of every description and degree. He was to endeavor to “cast down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God;” and allowing nothing to deter him, he was to press on, in spite of the violence of the populace, the hatred of priests, the gibes of philosophers, and the edicts of imperial courts. How stupendous an undertaking! To step out, as it were, and rush well-nigh single-handed on the bristling bayonets of a well-marshaled and mighty army. But then, at the same time, he was to act on the defensive. Every stronghold that he subdued was to be fortified and kept; every church that he founded was to receive his vigilant superintendence and care—its members were to be fed with wholesome doctrine, guarded against the wiles of false teachers, and built up in their most holy faith. And this oversight was to be bestowed, notwithstanding the ingratitude of some, the prejudice of others, and the determined opposition of not a few. Again we exclaim, How stupendous an undertaking! Yes; and none felt it more deeply than the apostle. Often when engaged in it the cry would go up from his trembling spirit, “Who is sufficient for these things?” Often he found that it was only by exercising the severest self-discipline that he could meet the demands of his high vocation; for in one place he says: “I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air; but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.” Now then, when, after having discharged the various functions of his office most nobly and faithfully for

years, he is imprisoned at Rome, and the opportunity is presented of being relieved of his responsibility without dishonor or disgrace; now that the curtain of eternity is partly withdrawn, and ministering spirits whisper that he is at liberty to depart, and to be with Christ; now that the gorgeous vision of heaven sweeps by him, and he can catch, as it were, a glimpse of its rolling waters, its emerald bowers, its gold-paved streets, and its shining throngs; now that he can see the King himself preparing to coronate him, and can anticipate the outbursts of harmony and praise which will greet his arrival before the eternal throne—O at such a time it seems that of all things the work of the ministry would be the most powerless to constrain him “to abide in the flesh.”

2. To show still further the apparent weakness of this constraint, you will observe that the work of the ministry involved the most severe sufferings.

At the present day, save in a few rare instances, the sufferings entailed by this work are comparatively light. Through the overruling providence of God we enjoy a season of unparalleled security and peace. The hoarse voice of persecution has ceased; the mouth of the ravenous lion has been stopped; Scotland's streams are no longer red with the blood of saints; Smithfield no more resounds with the shouts of the multitude as they rush with their robed victims to the waiting pile; St. Bartholomew's Day is never more ushered in with the strange signal-bell; the Waldenses are no longer chased, like their own chamois, from hill to hill; devoted men are no longer incarcerated in dismal and pestilential dungeons because they judge it right to obey God rather than man. The world has at last awoke from its folly, and discovered, in a measure, the value of a faithful ministry to its enlightenment and progress. Now the labors of the pulpit and the pastorate are unobstructed,

The gospel receives the patronage of princes and the reverence of the poor; it is defended by learning and recommended by eloquence; thousands are engaged in publishing it in every clime, and millions are praying for its speedy dissemination over all the earth. It was different, however, when the fisherman of Galilee and the tent-maker of Tarsus went forth to proclaim the gospel. Our lips quiver and our eyes moisten as we think of their dreadful sufferings. But of all the apostles and early evangelists not one was called to suffer so much as St. Paul. We never read the few verses in which he speaks of his sufferings but we feel our spirit throb in deepest sympathy, and we blush to think that we have ever murmured and repined: "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?" Now that we find him in prison at Rome, with the tender of heaven before him; now that the opportunity is given him of honorably leaving the work in which he has been so long engaged, and in which so much suffering is to be borne; now that angelic legions encircle him, and wait to escort him to the paradise of God; now that white-robed multitudes are looking down from the jasper walls, and tuning their harps in anticipation of his speedy arrival; now that the vision of Jesus is so soon to burst upon him and his soul to be suffused with its peerless

splendor—O again we say at such a time it seems that of all things the work of the ministry would be the most powerless to constrain him “to abide in the flesh.”

Yet—and “hear, O heavens; and give ear, O earth”—this work, with all its fearful responsibility and appalling suffering; this work, which was fast withering the vitality and strength of his mortal frame; this work, the prosecution of which was attended at every step with afflictions, necessities, distresses, stripes, imprisonments, and tumults; this work so powerfully constrained him that when heaven was thus spread out before him in all its matchless magnificence, and invitation wafted to him that he was at liberty to “depart, and to be with Christ,” he was at first placed “in a strait betwixt two,” and finally induced to decide for the present “to abide in the flesh.”

Glorious man! we cannot restrain our admiration of his lofty character. What a marvel was he of unselfishness, magnanimity, and patience! What zeal must he have felt for the salvation of the world! To whom shall we liken him? Point me not to human heroes. The most splendid mausoleum is not embellished with the deeds, nor does it glitter with the name, of one who is his equal. We can only liken him to Jesus, who, “though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich.” Occasions are the tests of character. It was evidently far harder for the apostle to consent to live than to die. It required the greater self-denial, and in relinquishing his desire for immediate dissolution, and in contenting himself to remain on earth that he might continue his benevolent labors regardless of peril and pain, he presents, beyond doubt, one of the noblest exhibitions of the morally sublime.

O thou undeserving world, when wilt thou learn to appreciate thy greatest sons? when wilt thou cease to embla-

zon thine Alexanders and Martels and Napoleons, and in their place substitute the Pauls and Peters and Polycarps who have shed such a halo of real glory around thee? But know this: if thou wilt not do them justice, there is One who will. Amid the awful solemnities of the last day, when the great white throne shall appear, and the trump of the archangel shall sound; when the heavens shall shrivel like a parchment and pass away with a great noise; when the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon become red like blood; when the globe shall be wrapt in flames, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; when cities and towns, palaces and temples, shall all be dissolved, and when saints shall be singing their paeon of joy and the wicked shall utter their dirge of despair; then, in a voice which shall swell above the universal din, shall Christ confess his self-denying followers, saying: "Well done, thou good and faithful servants; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

Dear brethren, a word to you in conclusion. We would have you not only admire, but emulate, the self-sacrifice of the apostle. You too are called to labor and to suffer here. If your trials are not so severe as his, yet perchance they often cause you to weary of your lot and to desire to depart and to be with Christ. At such times think of Paul, and be patient. Your present lot deserves not indeed to be put in competition with that heavenly felicity to which God has elevated your hopes; but such as it is, it is the gift of God —it is the sphere to which his providence has assigned you, and until dismissed from it you should neither slight the duties which it imposes nor shrink from the sufferings which it entails. An absolute and unquestioning submission to the will of God is the crowning excellence of Christian character. "The trying of your faith," says St. James, "worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work,

that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." As Christians, whatever our station, whatever our circumstances, it ill becomes us to desire death simply to be rid of responsibility and to be delivered from what is painful or distasteful. We should believe that so long as God continues us here we can subserve some useful purpose, and we should be so intent on accomplishing his purpose as to be ready to endure whatever may be incident to our situation. We never read of the apostle as being "in a strait betwixt two," until the choice was given him of immediate dissolution or of prolonged usefulness. Remember that such a choice has never been given you. Do not, then, give way to a spirit of fretfulness because God may see fit to protract your stay amid circumstances which are, perhaps, unusually afflictive. Look away from self, and mark how many souls are perishing for lack of knowledge, and thank God for the opportunity of devoting yourself awhile longer to their enlightenment and recovery. Look around you and see your brethren in the Church and ministry faint with "the burden and heat of the day," and thank God that you have the opportunity of still aiding them in their arduous toil; look above you and see the immense "cloud of witnesses" who survey you, and who, while anxious that you should soon swell their shining ranks, would yet have you win a few more stars to your "crown of rejoicing," and thank God for the opportunity of winning them. Look higher still, and fix your eye on the throne of Jesus, and remember that he has said, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world;" and thank God for his presence, and press on. O never allow your trials to cause you to murmur or to grow lukewarm in the service of Christ. Be patient, be zealous; weary not in well-doing. If the day of life lingers, rejoice and put the more labor into it; if the summer-time of probation tarries, be glad, and secure from it a more

abundant harvest. “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”-

Finish thy work—the time is short,
The sun is in the west,
The night is coming down; till then
Think not of rest.

Yes, finish all thy work, then rest;
Till then, rest never;
The rest prepared for thee by God
Is rest forever.

Finish thy work, then go in peace;
Life's battle fought and won,
Hear from the throne the Master's voice:
“Well done! well done!”

SERMON III.

THE VALLEY OF BACA; OR, THE RESOURCES OF CHRISTIANS IN ADVERSITY.

“Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools.” (Ps. lxxxiv. 6.)

THREE times a year it was customary for the Israelites to repair to Jerusalem to celebrate, with suitable services, the goodness and mercy of Jehovah. To those who lived at the extremities of Palestine, or who had emigrated to regions beyond, the journey must have been long and toilsome. A portion of the route by which some had to reach the city lay through a sandy desert. No fountain with fringe of palms relieved this dreary waste; no stream meandered through it, delighting the eye with its crystal flow, and charming the ear with its gentle melody. To pilgrims this place was known as the “Valley of Baca.” The word “Baca” is derived from a verb which signifies to weep. And doubtless this name was applied to it on account of the tears which sprinkled it as travelers toiled through its scorching sands. Relief, however, was to be found in this valley by those who crossed it on their way to participate in the worship at Jerusalem. While ordinarily it was dry, yielding no water to refresh the exhausted frame, the Israelites had now only to dig wells, to prepare pits, and rain from heaven would supply their need. Thus they could “go from strength to strength, and every one of them in Zion appear before God.”

As the special dwelling-place of God, Jerusalem was a type of heaven. And we cannot think of “the tribes going up to the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the

name of the Lord," without being reminded of our own pilgrimage as Christians to the "city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." As in the case of the Israelites, some begin their journey almost within sight of the city's spires; on the steps of infancy they glide through its jeweled gates. Others seize their staff and commence their march among distant hills; with silver locks and bent and trembling form, they draw near the celestial city. Our route, too, has its "Valley of Baca." It has, indeed, its meadows gay with roses of Sharon, and its mountain-tops from which we catch far-off glimpses of the city of peace; but it has also its "desert place"—a place where trackless sands, and sultry winds, and burning sun unite to oppress the spirit. "Through much tribulation we enter into the kingdom of God." Pilgrims are often found weeping on their way to Zion. Prostrate beneath some friendly juniper, they are heard like Elijah moaning: "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life." But not thus should we traverse this dismal vale. It is our privilege to "rejoice in tribulation." Those who pass this spot on other errands than ours may well weep and lament. The desert of affliction yields no joy to the sinful and impenitent. But there is comfort for believers amid the severest trials. They have only to open wells, and the rain will fill them; they have only to apply their thoughts and energies as directed by the Divine Word, and heavenly consolation will reward their labor. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

Fellow-pilgrims, are any of you in the "Valley of Baca?" Are you toiling wearily through its sands? Is the print of tears upon your faces? Has joy almost fled from your hearts? Suffer the word of exhortation. I

would tell you of wells that you may dig—facts you may ponder, a course of conduct you may pursue—with the certainty of obtaining from them “grace to help in time of need.”

1. The first well I would have you open—or, to drop the figure, the first fact I would have you consider—is the brief duration of your afflictions.

Suppose your pilgrimage to extend over a period of three-score years and ten; suppose most of the way to lie through the Valley of Baca; suppose that only at long intervals are your eyes gladdened with the sight of running brooklets and of flowery meads; still, how short is your journey, how soon is it ended, and how quickly, if faithful, are you at rest! Brother, sister, you are immortal. Unending ages are before you. This life is but a speck, a tiny cloud in the midst of an expanse of illimitable blue. “The time is short,” says St. Paul; and the deduction he draws from the fact is, “It remaineth that they that weep be as though they wept not.” His own sufferings he sublimely styles “our light affliction.” It was light in his estimation because momentary. “Our light affliction, which is but for a moment.” Come, brethren, open this well—the rain will descend and fill it; set before you the speedy termination of your troubles—it will refresh your hearts and dissipate your gloom. You may have been bereaved. Dear ones who walked with you Zionward have been removed by sudden accident or cruel disease. Earth has become to you a wilderness without a fragrant flower or a flowing fount. But why sit and weep? A little while, and you will clasp hands with the departed in the paradise of God. You may have been reduced from affluence to poverty. Once your path led over mountains of myrrh, and through orchards of olives, and by the margin of singing streams; now it is through a barrenness, with no green strip of earthly de-

light to beguile the way. But why mourn? You are hastening to the New Jerusalem. You will soon see "the King in his beauty." "In his presence is fullness of joy; at his right-hand there are pleasures for evermore." You may be the victim of persecution. The tongue of slander has wounded you as with coals of juniper. You say, "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar! My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace." But why repine? "He is near that justifieth;" and behind yon cloud is the mount of God.

2. The second well I would have you dig—the second fact I would have you consider—is the divine origin of your afflictions.

Who made the Valley of Baca? He whose hand reared Lebanon with its cedars, and Carmel with its excellency. He knew when he meted out its length how often it would be traversed by the Israelites in their journey to Jerusalem. He knew the fatigue it would occasion, and the tears it would evoke. That sorrow is a part of Christian experience, that the path to the heavenly Jerusalem conducts us not only through green pastures and beside still waters, but along beetling precipices and over glistening sands, is equally the result of Divine Providence. It is true that some griefs spring solely from our own folly; but even in their case the pain consequent upon misdoing is to be regarded as a chastisement from above. We sow the seed, but God puts the bitterness into the stalk and leaf. The greater number of our afflictions as Christians, however, arise from the direct appointment or permission of God. We were prudent in our investments, yet riches took wings and flew away; we were temperate in our diet, yet health declined and we were prostrated upon a bed of pain; we were upright in our walk, yet our character was traduced and our motives misconstrued; we were exemplary in our

homes, yet our children were disobedient and averse to the way of righteousness. Such trials are not to be regarded by us as accidental, but as ordered or permitted by Divine Providence. And is it not soothing, is it not comforting to recognize in our afflictions the hand of our God? We have only to contemplate his perfections, and we pass at once from the gloom of midnight into the radiance of the morning. Is he not infinitely wise? The evidence of his skill is in every leaf and in every flower; it sounds in every sea, and sparkles in every star. Is he not infinitely good? Could he have given a sublimer expression of love than that which we see on Calvary? Surely, *he* is “too wise to err, and too good to be unkind.” When surprise was manifested at the patience of an Arabian woman under heavy affliction, she said, “When I look on God’s face I do not feel his stroke.” O brethren, toiling through Baca’s vale, come, open the well—the rain will quickly fill it; come, consider the divine origin of your afflictions—it will put nerve into your hearts, and strength and fleetness into your steps. What gave such buoyancy to the spirit of Job in the midst of his disasters? It was a quaff from the well of which I speak. The Sabeans and Chaldeans had destroyed his property, the hurricane had buried his children beneath the house of their festivity; but not to these did he ascribe his losses—he saw in them but the subordinate agents of a higher will, and he exclaimed: “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord!” It was this same well which so often refreshed David in the midst of his calamities. We find him taking comfort from the thought: “When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then *thou knewest* my path.” And we hear him saying: “I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because *thou* didst it.”

3. The third well I would have you dig—the third fact

I would have you consider—is the manifold uses of affliction.

Did the Valley of Baca serve no useful purpose? Did it not test the loyalty of the Israelites to Jehovah? Would any one toil through its sands unless he reverenced the authority which commanded the nation to make these pilgrimages to Jerusalem? Love to God and zeal for his service were presupposed in making these annual journeys. And hence says the psalmist: “Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways.” “The ways” were trodden because loved, as conducting the pilgrim to the house of God. The Valley of Baca was of further use in developing the energy and patience of the Israelites. In addition to this, it served to illustrate the all-sufficiency of God. How strengthening must it have been to the faith of the Israelites to see the rain descend and fill the pits which they had dug in expectation of divine succor! The Valley of Baca also prepared them to appreciate more fully the pleasures awaiting them at Jerusalem. The fatigue which they had undergone put new notes of gladness into their song as they praised the God of Jacob in his holy temple. Brethren, is there no analogy between the uses of this valley and the advantages to be derived from our own afflictions? Do not trials test the strength and sincerity of our love to God? The weeds whose roots barely cling to the soil are scorched and withered by the fierce beams of the summer sun, while the goodly tree, whose roots penetrate far below the surface, is stirred and quickened into more vigorous and fruitful life. How quickly is moist vapor dispersed by the rising wind; how little reck the mountain the fury of the storm. The miner who has found a lump of gold is better satisfied after he has submitted it to the proper tests. But to know that we are regenerate, of which our trials help to make us

aware, is more important than to know that we possess millions of gold. Affliction also serves to develop and beautify character. Some plants do not bloom until after they have undergone a winter. It is often thus with ourselves. Not until we have been subjected to the snows of adversity and the withering blasts of multiplied afflictions do we unfold the beauties of the Christian character. "Tribulation," says the apostle, "worketh patience;" and the estimate which is put upon patience in Scripture we may learn from the words: "Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." Affliction shows us how God can sustain us under the most unfavorable circumstances. They thus magnify his grace, and give grounds for the exercise of a stronger faith. Affliction, by contrast, will also enhance the joys of heaven. The longer the tempest, the sweeter the calm; the harder the toil, the more welcome the rest. O brethren, why so sorrowful in Baca's vale? Open this well—the water will replenish it; consider the uses of your affliction—you will renew your strength and go on your way rejoicing.

4. The fourth well I would have you open is prayer.

"Is any among you afflicted?" asks St. James; and his answer is, "Let him pray." As a source of comfort in trouble, prayer is recommended in Scripture not only by precept, but also by example. See Jacob, in the gloom of night, standing alone by the brook of Jabbok. He is alarmed at the prospect of meeting Esau. He remembers his brother's threats. He seeks relief in prayer. He wrestles (physically as well as spiritually) for a blessing. The morning dawns; but not more radiant is the sunshine, not more serene are the heavens, than that triumphant man. Hear David recalling with thankfulness the efficacy of prayer in his afflictions. "In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my

soul." See the Saviour praying in Gethsemane, and mark the flight of the angel as he descends to strengthen him. Hear Paul pleading for the removal of his "thorn in the flesh," and see him rising at last, not with the thorn extracted, but with such a sufficiency of grace that he can glory in his infirmity. The tree has only to strike its root into the earth, and in some mysterious manner nourishment will be furnished it; and the soul in trouble has only to reach into the unseen and take firm hold of God, and in some hidden way sustenance will be afforded. O the power of prayer! It gives patience under provocation, resignation in the midst of disappointment, courage in the face of opposition, and hope in the agonies of death. Brethren, open this well—engage in this exercise; there is no path in life so gloomy that it will not cheer; there is no desert so desolate that it will not gladden with an oasis.

5. Another well I would have you open is your past experience.

I suppose that most of the Israelites who journeyed through the Valley of Baca had been there before; and the remembrance of the help they had experienced on former occasions would inspire them with confidence on re-entering this barren waste. And my afflicted brethren, have you no precious memories of God's kindness in the past to support you under present trial? O remember the years of the right-hand of the most High! Do you not recollect when young and inexperienced you were obliged to go forth and earn a livelihood for yourself, and how, when you almost despaired, openings occurred, and friends were found by whose aid you were enabled to attain to ease and competency? Do you not recollect when the unerring archer laid low your first-born, and you saw the child you so tenderly loved carried from your door to the sepulcher—do you not recollect the strange sweet calm which flowed

into your heart, enabling you to say: "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth to him good?" Do you not recollect when your business was shattered, and it seemed as though, from one cause and another, you would be deprived of all you possessed, how surprised you were at the equanimity with which you could survey the prospect? In these and similar instances you but proved the truth of the words: "I will never leave thee, I will never forsake thee;" "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." Why, then, so disquieted now? "Hope thou in God." Take comfort from past deliverances. This was one of David's remedies for despondency. "O my God," he says, "my soul is cast down within me; therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar." It is related of a pious minister that one day, being in great despondency, he sent for a brother minister to come and help him out of his distress. The minister was unable just then to comply with the request, but charged the messenger to convey these words to his master, "Remember Torwood!" The messenger, of course, was ignorant of the application, but his master understood it well; for at Torwood he had received special manifestations of Divine grace. The words were no sooner pronounced than his darkness vanished, and he exclaimed: "Yes, Lord; I will remember thee from the hill Mizar and from the Hermonites." Brethren, in passing through the Valley of Baca, neglect not to open this well; call up the past mercies of God; it will prevent despair, and give you confidence to pursue your way.

6. The last well I would have you open is the bliss of heaven.

Aside from the "rain which filled the pools," and from which the Israelites drank in the desert vale, how refreshing must have been the thought that each toilsome step was

diminishing the distance which lay between them and their destination! To them "beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, was Mount Zion." There was the temple with its shekinah, its ark, its golden candlestick, its altar of burnt-offering, its robed priests, and solemn services. There were "the thrones of the house of David." There too, on festival occasions, were the thousands of Israel. As the pilgrims marched through the burning waste, we can imagine them cheering each other with the words, "Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem!" Brethren, have we no nearing joys to support us in our griefs? Are we not hastening to the New Jerusalem? Is not each day, each moment, bringing us nearer the city of the living God? What raptures await us there! Are the sufferings of this present time worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed? "Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God!" Thy structure is of all precious stones. Thy luminary is the Lamb. Thine inhabitants are all "kings and priests unto God." They know no care; they heave no sigh. Their peace is like the waveless calm of that sea of glass in which are mirrored the mansions of eternity. This city is indestructible. The engines of war never shake its strong foundations; the stroke of the lightning never blackens its lofty spires; the earthquake never cleaves its magnificent golden streets; winter never strips its trees of their foliage; summer heats never dry its living streams; ruined walls and roofless homes never sadden the spectator's eye. Pilgrim brethren, are you foot-sore and weary in the midst of life's valley? Here is a well that you may dig. O the refreshing draught it will yield you! The eye will brighten, the limbs become strong and supple, and you will grasp your staff with fresh determination, as you anticipate the things which God has prepared for those who love him.

Let us, in conclusion, look back a moment and remind ourselves of the wells we may open in the Valley of Baca. Let us charge our minds with the resources at our command in the season of affliction. There is the brief duration of our afflictions, there is the divine origin of our afflictions, there are the manifold uses of affliction, there is prayer, there is our past experience, and there is the bliss of heaven. Brethren, these wells have been opened again by the innumerable pilgrims who, in every generation, have journeyed to the heavenly Jerusalem. They have never been opened in vain. There were times when the Valley of Baca was far more scorching than now—when those who trod it had “trial of cruel mockings and scourgings—yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment.” It has been sprinkled with blood-drops as well as with tear-drops. Still these wells had only to be opened, and reviving grace instantly filled them. Let us, then, not weary in well-doing. Let us be followers of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. Now they hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither doth the sun light on them, nor any heat. The Lamb who is in the midst of the throne feeds them, and leads them unto living fountains of water, and God has wiped away all tears from their eyes.

SERMON IV

THE CHOICE OF MOSES

“By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.” (Heb. xi. 24-26.)

ST. PAUL celebrates in this chapter the achievements of faith. Conspicuous among the illustrious worthies whose faith he records—a star of the first magnitude in a firmament of splendor—is the name of Moses. There is a peculiar charm about the life of the great lawgiver. It is one of those rare, checkered, eventful, pathetic, and wondrous experiences which delight the fancy and call into exercise every susceptibility and power of the soul. The babe afloat on the waters of the Nile; the boy growing up amid the pride and pomp of Pharaoh’s court; the man of mature years a wanderer in the wilderness; the returned exile confronting Pharaoh, and demanding the release of his enslaved brethren; the leader of the people guiding them through the Red Sea and across the trackless desert; these and other points in his history are invested with absorbing and imperishable interest. And then, how grand his exit from time:

By Nebo’s lonely mountain,
On this side Jordan’s wave,
In a vale in the land of Moab
There lies a lonely grave;
And no man dug the sepulcher,
And no man saw it e’er,
For the angels of God upturned the sod,
And laid the dead man there.

And had he not high honor?
The hill-side for his pall,
To lie in state while angels wait,
With stars for tapers tall;
And the dark rock-pines like tossing plumes,
Over his bier to wave,
And God's own hand in that lonely land,
To lay him in the grave.

It is to the faith of Moses that we would invite special attention and particularly that exhibition of it which marked the momentous period indicated by the expression, "when he was come to years."

From Stephen, in his defense before the Jewish sanhedrim, we learn that Moses was "full forty years old" when he made the choice recorded in the text. It is said in Exodus that it was "in those days when Moses was grown." In the early ages of the world mankind developed more slowly than at present. I suppose Moses at forty was what a young man now is at twenty-one. Maturity was not reached as quickly then; but as a compensation life was proportionably longer. "Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died;" and even at that advanced age "his eye was not dim nor his natural force abated."

"When he was come to years" denotes the period when his education was complete, when the rule of his adoptive parent was at an end; and when, in the exercise of his own free thought, he was at liberty to choose his career in life. I always sympathize with a young man at this particular juncture. Whatever earthly calling he may select—whether he decides to devote his energies to the mart, the forum, to agriculture, to politics, or to some one of the different handicrafts, it is of the utmost importance that he should resolve to be a servant of God. Such a resolution, earnestly and solemnly taken at this crisis will, in all probability, be permanent, will preserve him from many an evil, render

his life truly useful and happy, and procure for him at last eternal glory. The postponement of such a determination, or the opposite positively taken, will, in all likelihood, launch the soul upon a voyage of misery from which contrary minds shall forbid return, and which will end in the howling tempest and midnight wreck amid the breakers of despair.

The choice of Moses at this decisive period is worthy of universal imitation, and we would consider it to-day with the view of commanding it to all, but especially to young men.

We regard his choice as an act of faith, and as such we would have you ponder first the greatness, and secondly the reasonableness, of his faith.

I. The Greatness of his Faith.

This will appear when we consider what he renounced, and then what he embraced.

1. He renounced *honor*. “Refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter.”

I need not rehearse the story of his adoption. You are all familiar with his exposure in an ark of bulrushes, and his discovery by the despot’s daughter, who, moved with pity, rescued him from danger, and brought him up as her own son. In repudiating his adoption he resigned the dignity and prospects it conferred. It was no light thing, humanly speaking, to be recognized as the adopted son of the Egyptian princess. Josephus informs us that Pharaoh had no son, and that consequently the foundling Moses, had he retained his position and conformed to the customs of the Egyptian court, would have succeeded to the throne. Faith, then, led him to renounce the prospect of a regal scepter, the sovereignty of one of the mightiest empires of antiquity. You ask, Is high honor incompatible with piety? Not necessarily. Where will you find a purer character

than Joseph? And yet, in Egypt he was second only to the king. Where will you find a man more scrupulously holy than Daniel? And yet, he was exalted to the rank of third among the potentates of Babylon. Obadiah was "governor of the house of Ahab." Mordecai saw no reason for refusing the honors of the Persian monarch. Salutations were sent by the apostle to "the saints which were of Cæsar's household." In these instances earthly dignities were accepted, honorable stations maintained, without sin. As a rule, however, lofty positions in life cannot be sought or held without injury to conscience and disloyalty to God. It was thus in the case of Moses. The King of Egypt "knew not Joseph"—had no sympathy with the history, and no regard for the worship, of the Israelites. It was impossible to enjoy his favor without compromising character and incurring the Divine displeasure; and hence Moses repudiated his adoption—"refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter," though by so doing he forfeited a throne.

Young men, when tempted to enter a path—however dazzling—which you cannot follow without defilement of your soul; when offered a place—however proud—the maintenance of which will call down on you the wrath of God, think of Moses, and refuse.

2. He renounced not only honor, but *wealth*. "The treasures in Egypt."

This expression seems to sustain the tradition of the Jewish historian, that Moses was heir to the Egyptian throne. Egypt was, at that time, an absolute monarchy, and the lives and property of its citizens were, to a large extent, in the royal keeping. It is scarcely possible to imagine the vast opulence to which the kingdom had attained at this early period. The lofty pyramids which pierce the skies, the ruins which lie scattered along the banks of the

Nile; fragments of colossal statues, obelisks, palaces, and temples; these, and other relics of ancient magnificence, remain to attest the exceeding splendor and prosperity of those times. Moses renounced the prospect of all this wealth.

The thirst for riches is one of the most common and dominant desires of the human heart. You have seen a piece of iron drawn to a magnet—what that magnet is to iron, money, or its equivalent, is to thousands. To gratify their greed, to meet the insatiate demands of their covetousness, what have men not done? They have crossed oceans and traversed continents, dared the perils of the wilderness and the dangers of the deep; they have bartered truth and honesty, sundered friendships, violated covenants, trampled upon the tenderest ties, and committed the blackest crimes that stain the chronicles of time. From this we can estimate how great the self-denial which could turn away from the imposing wealth of Egypt, content to renounce it all rather than swerve from the path of duty. You ask, Are riches incompatible with true religion? We answer, Not of necessity. They may be both amassed and held without sullying in the least our Christian character. Job was one of the wealthiest men in the East, and yet he was “a perfect man, one that feared God and eschewed evil.” Their pursuit, however, is dangerous, and often fatal. “They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.” Their possession tends to foster an undue affection for them, and trust in them, generating parsimony and self-sufficiency. Hence the exclamation of the Saviour, “How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!” In the case of Moses, he could not enjoy “the treasures in Egypt,” and at the same time maintain inviolate his religious character. And hence he renounced them, willingly and without a sigh.

In his renunciation of earthly riches, Moses is a model for our times. The passion for wealth was never more intense than at present. Every kind of iniquity is being perpetrated to gratify its lust—sycophancy, base artifice, fraud, arson, murder. Covetousness is the sin of our nation.

Young men, if solicited to enter some avenue to wealth at the expense of your religious principle; if engaged in some business which you can render more remunerative by being less honest, think of Moses, and choose rather to be poor.

3. Moses renounced not only honor and wealth, but *pleasure*. “The pleasures of sin.”

We include under this the enjoyment which springs from the abuse of our bodily senses. The wealth and power to which Moses would have succeeded had he acquiesced in his adoption would have placed at his command every sensual indulgence. We know something from history, not to speak of our own observation, of the seductive influence of unlawful pleasures. For their sake homes have been desolated and kingdoms overthrown; for their sake the mighty man has lowered himself to a level with the brute, and ended a once high career amid the hissings of contempt. To believers they have been the frequent occasion of apostasy: Solomon—that sun in Israel’s firmament—was plunged by them into “outer darkness.” In the parable of the sower, prominent among the thorns which choked the good seed were “the love of pleasure and the lust of other things.” Think, then, how strong must have been that self-control which could survey unmoved “the pleasures of sin” to be enjoyed in Egypt—pleasures greater than those for which Mark Antony sacrificed his all, and which, with all their attendant ills, constituted a cup which few would have dashed untasted to the ground. You ask, Are all pleasures sinful? We answer, No. Pleasures which do

not transcend the bounds of chastity and temperance; pleasures in keeping with our dignity as immortal beings, and which, by assisting health and recuperating our spirits, qualify us for the better performance of our duties, are not sinful, but innocent. The pleasures offered to Moses were of another kind—"the pleasures of sin." They were "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life"—gratifications forbidden by the law of God; and hence, enticing as they were, he rejected them. And in rejecting them he evinced the greatness of his faith.

Young men, you may be often tempted to indulge in sinful pleasures. Think of Moses, and forego them. You may be tempted to the theater—its scenic display will no doubt charm you; but pollution will flow into your soul through the medium of eye and ear. Think of Moses, and refuse. You may be tempted to the ball-room—its mazy whirl and voluptuous music will no doubt enchant you; but low, base thoughts will be engendered, the fruit of which may be a shameful sin. Think of Moses, and refuse. You may be tempted to the saloon—the intoxicating bowl has, no doubt, its cheer; but "wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging, and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise." Think of Moses, and refuse. You may be tempted to still darker scenes—but, "the house" of that woman "is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death." Think of Moses, and refuse.

We have considered what Moses renounced—now consider what he embraced.

1. *Fellowship with a despised people*—"the people of God."

The Israelites were at that time the only nation among whom was observed the worship of the true God; and they were a nation of slaves. "Their lives were made bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field." All that they could offer

Moses was a share in the Divine covenant—the promise made to Abraham and to his seed after him, the promise of Canaan for a possession, and of heaven for an inheritance, and also of a Messiah who, springing from themselves, should attain to the sovereignty of the world, and be to its inhabitants the source of ineffable and endless peace. These expectations, indeed—especially that of a Messiah—only rendered them more obnoxious to their Egyptian masters, to whom such hopes appeared presumptuous and delusive. And yet, with only these hopes to encourage him, Moses identified himself with the enslaved and despised Israelites; by that act renouncing all the honor, wealth, and pleasure which he had in prospect as the son of Pharaoh's daughter, “esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt.”

Young men, never hesitate to unite with God's people because they may be poor or despised. Be satisfied of the soundness of their doctrine and the purity of their lives, and then, however mean may be their temporal condition, or however much they may be scorned for their faith in Christ, cast in your lot with them. Do not stand aloof because the rich and the gay and the fashionable are not among them. Penetrate beneath appearances. Lazarus in his rags was a better companion than the rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. The obscurest saint is a child of God, with the blood-royal of heaven in his spiritual veins; and is destined, if faithful, to a dignity and splendor which will make him the peer of the angels who bow before the throne.

2. Moses embraced not only fellowship with a despised people, but *suffering*. “Choosing rather to *suffer affliction* with the people of God.”

The idea is that his union with the Israelites was not simply nominal; he identified himself with them expecting

not only to endure the stigma of such a connection, but to participate in all their sorrows until deliverance came. He did not expect his previous rank to obtain for him exemption from the ills of bondage. He did not expect, nor did he wish, to retain his princely state while his "kinsmen according to the flesh" groaned by reason of their burdens. Like Him of whom he was an illustrious type, in stooping it was "to be made in all things like unto his brethren." Reared as he had been in a palace, accustomed to luxury and ease, the recipient of manifold attentions, how wretched must have seemed to him the condition of the Israelites. And yet, with all its wretchedness, he deliberately chose it. How great his faith!

And he had his affliction—not in Egypt indeed, but in the wilderness, where he was compelled to wander as a shepherd, in comparative solitude, for forty years. Think you that to a man like Moses it was no trial to have to spend the maturity of his years in silence and obscurity?

Young men, emulate his example, and "choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God." There is more for you to endure than the simple shame of being professed followers of Christ. That, in these times and in this land, may be lightly borne. There is the sharp discipline, the fiery ordeal, by which God tests and purifies the faith of all who seek his favor. There are trials peculiar to his people, trials arranged and regulated by his wisdom, various, and sometimes poignant in their nature, though always benevolent in their designs. Shrink not from them. They are stepping-stones by which you may rise to a loftier spirituality and attain a more glorious reward. "Rejoice in tribulation." "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations."

We have now considered the greatness of Moses's faith, as exhibited in what he renounced, and also in what he embraced. We will consider:

II. The Reasonableness of his Faith.

This will appear from two facts, whose recognition by Moses was made by the Divine Spirit efficacious in the production and maintenance of his faith.

1. *The transitory nature of all sinful pleasures.* They are only "for a season."

Strange it is that a fact so obvious should be so generally overlooked. It may be necessary, therefore, that we be at pains to impress you with the fugitive character of unsanctified enjoyments, if we would have you approve of the faith of Moses.

Think, then, of the brevity of that period during which sinful pleasures are possible. "What is your life?" asks St. James; and his answer is: "It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away." How soon old age steals upon us, silvering our hair, palsying our limbs, and robbing us of our strength! The longest life is but a narrow span. The venerable patriarch, leaning on his staff, and recalling the summers he has seen come and go, feels that they have passed like a flowing stream. "How old art thou?" asked Pharaoh of the bent and trembling Jacob. "And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty years; few and evil have the days of the years of my life been." Death is coming, and that speedily. With its coming will terminate all further possibility of unhallowed joys. To the soul that has hitherto regaled itself on the sweets of sin there will suddenly be spread a blackened wilderness, scorched by sirocco blasts and boundless as the years of God.

Brief as is the period in which sinful pleasures may be enjoyed, they are liable to frequent interruptions. Cares attend the footsteps of each; life has no path that hath not its thorns. Often the most coveted positions are the most unhappy, like as the tallest summits are the bleakest and

most desolate. A celebrated Moorish king, the grandeur and prosperity of whose reign have scarcely been surpassed, thus wrote a few days before his death: "Fifty years are elapsed since I ascended the throne of my ancestors. During this whole term I had pleasure, wealth, and honor so unqualifiedly at my command that Heaven seemed to have lavished upon me all its choicest blessings. I now find myself on the verge of the grave, and endeavoring at this awful moment to recollect how many days of this long reign I can call happy ones. I find the whole number taken together does not exceed *fourteen*." And we venture to say that those fourteen days were spent if not in holy, at least in innocent, enjoyments.

The pleasures of sin, even when enjoyed, are far from satisfying. There is a tinge of bitterness in the gathered fruit. It is difficult to so drug and stupefy conscience that she shall not awake and glare ominously on our impious mirth. Ah! even in the crowded ball-room, where beauty smiles and light laughter rings upon the ear, could we explore the hearts of the gay assemblage, we should find white ghosts lurking there—remorseful, self-accusing thoughts, which, however often and peremptorily they may be banished, sternly refuse to go. Were our ears acute enough to catch the unsyllabled utterances of that throng, we should discover that we had approached a sea—

Although its heart is rich in pearls and ores,
The sea complains upon a thousand shores;
Sea like they moan forever.

Still another consideration is that the capacity for sinful pleasures gradually ceases. . "The world passeth away, and the *lust* thereof." "But if a man live many years and rejoice in them all, yet let him remember the days of darkness, for they shall be many." The youth wishes to know what pleasure is, and so he sips greedily of each nectareous flow-

er; but ere long he is satiated, and finds it more and more difficult to gratify his jaded taste; and then there is presented the spectacle of a man worn out before his time—not changed—O no; a volcano still, black, scarred, but with its fires exhausted!

How reasonable, then, the faith that could look away from “the pleasures of sin” in Egypt—pleasures as ravishing but as fleeting as the golden tints of evening, and like them concealing beneath their splendor the shadows of coming night.

2. The other fact which evoked the faith of Moses, and vindicates its reasonableness, was *the recompense of heaven*. It is said that “he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.”

With no assurance from God of a future and better life, the pleasures of sin, though temporary, would have been invested with charms too powerful for even Moses to resist. And here it would be well to remind ourselves of the folly of discoursing to men of the vanity of earthly pleasures, unless at the same time we unfold to them those that are heavenly and enduring. If the vine can discern no tall trunk on which to uplift its dependent form, what can it do but grovel in the dust? Moses had the promise, made to Abraham and his seed after him, of the land of Canaan. That this promise was not understood in a temporal sense only, is evident from St. Paul: “By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; *for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.*” The reward then anticipated by Moses was a home in heaven; the promise whose fulfillment he expected was eternal life in

glory. Was not his then a reasonable faith? Great as was the self-denial it involved, extending even to the renunciation of an empire, viewed in relation to the promise of Jehovah—a promise which he had sworn by himself to perform—it commends itself as the truest wisdom. How grander far to be a king and priest unto God forever than simply King of Egypt! How better far to drink of everlasting pleasures, rivers that never dry, than to spend a lifetime dipping into cisterns, “broken cisterns, that can hold no water!” Yes, the faith of Moses was a reasonable faith, for he had in prospect a crown of life that fadeth not away, and the smile of God, which is the soul’s essential peace; and no wonder that the yoke of bondage lost its weight, the desert its solitude, and reproach its sting; for these troubles were but momentary, and to be succeeded by a day of interminable joy, widening and brightening with the bliss of God.

Methinks a thrill of peculiar sympathy must have vibrated the soul of St. Paul when he penned the words of our text. There is a striking similarity between himself and Moses. He is, in fact, the Moses of the new dispensation. It was a brilliant prospect, considered from a human standpoint, which he renounced for Christ. As a man he was preëminently gifted. He possessed all the elements necessary to render him a mighty and successful leader. At the time of his conversion he was perhaps the most marked man in all Judea. Had he so willed, his name might have gone down to posterity emblazoned with all that men call glory. “But what things were gain to him, those he counted loss for Christ.” His choice and highest ambition was that he might “know Christ, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means he might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.”

My friends, young and old, have faith in God. Great as may be the trials to which it calls you, demanding of you the surrender of cherished pleasures, the subjugation of evil appetites, laying upon you the reproach of Christ and the burden of his cross; only exercise it, and in the end it shall be found to have been a reasonable faith.

O the “far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” which awaits the righteous! “I reckon,” says St. Paul, “that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” Think you that now as, crowned and clothed in white, Moses beholds the King in his beauty and the land that is very far off—the full blaze of that glory whose outskirts only he was permitted to see in the cleft of the rock at Horeb—think you he regrets his choice? Nor will you, my brethren, when the toils of the Christian life are past, the voyage ended, and rest reached.

SERMON V.

THE TREE OF LIFE.

"I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste." (The Song of Solomon ii. 3.)

THE Scriptures present us with many emblems of Christ; and we have here one of the most beautiful and attractive. Christ is represented as a tree. As such he is to the Church the occasion of exquisite delight. What there is in him to awaken such joy will appear when we consider his manifold perfections.

1. Consider the *age* of the tree.

Walking in the woods, your attention is now and then directed to some tree more venerable than the rest. You stand and look at it with a feeling of reverence. You think of the long years, the centuries perhaps, that have passed since it sprung, a tender sapling, from the earth. You think of the events that have transpired since it first received the beams of the sun and the soft drops of the summer shower. You think of the eyes that may have gazed upon it, now dim in death; and the feet that may have walked beneath it, now still forever in the grave. But old as that tree may be, its years are as nothing compared with the age of Christ. He is the Tree of Life. There never was a period when he was without existence. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever the world was formed; when indeed there was nothing in space—not one of all the countless orbs which now irradiate its depths; when there were no angels—not a winged seraph, chanting his songs before the eternal throne: in that dateless past Jesus lived and rose up in the sight of his Divine Father,

“the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person.” It would take but a short time to count the concentric rings which mark the years of the mightiest monarch of our forests; but who shall count the years of the Son of God? He is “from everlasting to everlasting.”

2. Consider the *size* of the tree.

Some trees are distinguished for their colossal height and far-reaching breadth. We have read of trees so large that an army could stand beneath the canopy of their umbraeuous boughs. But how insignificant is the stateliest tree of earth to the Plant of Renown, the Lord Jesus Christ! “Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord?” There is no place where we shall be beyond the sight of his towering splendor. The trunk of this Tree has its roots in eternity, and its branches extend through immensity. The stars in their far-off orbits, the nebulae which no telescope can resolve, are but some of the leaves and blossoms and fruits which hang from its mighty arms. “Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work of thy hands.” “All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.”

3. Consider the *strength* of the tree.

Some trees will grow and flourish in the most exposed situation—on some desolate crag where the salt winds blow, or far up on the crest of the mountain, where the avalanche thunders and the wild tempests rage. Firmly clasping the underlying rocks, they lift their proud heads and live on, while cities crumble and generations pass away. But how feeble are the mightiest trees which crown our hills and fringe our coasts to the Root of Jesse, in whose stem is “the power of an endless life!” Sooner or later they all fall—worn out by inward decay, or felled by the woodman’s ax, or uprooted by the maddened storm. The terebinth under

which Abraham pitched his tent has long since disappeared; and so has the oak under whose broad shade the faithful Deborah was laid to rest. We should search in vain for the palms at Elim, so grateful to the Israelites in their wanderings through the wilderness; or the mulberry-trees, the rustling in whose tops was to David the divine signal of victory; or for the cedars, whose dense forests were the glory of Lebanon in the days of Solomon; or for the gnarled olives which quivered in the moonlight as they witnessed the strange agony in Gethsemane. One by one they have all perished. But Christ lives, impervious to change, unaffected by the flight of time, undisturbed by the wrath of man. He is incorruptible. He has no principle of decay. His strength is infinite. The loudest storms of opposition cannot bend or detach him from his sure foundations. “In him is life.” “His years shall not fail.”

4. Consider the *symmetry* of this tree.

Few trees are perfectly symmetrical. There is usually a lack of proportion, an incompleteness, even where there is much that is beautiful and imposing. The limbs may be more numerous on one side than on the other; here they may be thrown out in graceful curves, but there with unshapely angles; here they may be green and fruitful, but there they may be decayed and broken. Now and then you find a tree unmarred by these defects—at least they are not apparent to the casual glance. I have seen such trees, and I have returned again and again to feast my eyes on their comely forms. But what is their symmetry to that of the Tree of Righteousness, the Son of the living God? A closer inspection will invariably discover some flaw in the most symmetrical of our trees. But scrutinize Christ ever so closely, go round and round the whole circumference of his earthly life, peer into the innermost recesses of his being, look upon the twining branches of his thoughts

and feelings, contemplate the rich verdure of his words and acts—nowhere can you detect the slightest blemish. The testimony of impartial criticism, like that of Pilate, must be, “I find in him no fault at all.” In this respect he stands alone among men. All others are more or less irregular in their development. They are perhaps remarkable for intelligence, but they are wanting in affection; they may be tender and compassionate, but they are lacking in decision; they may be frank and communicative, but they are devoid of dignity; they may be zealous and fearless, but destitute of prudence; they may have all excellences, but while some shall hang in ripened sweetness, others shall be but in flower, and others still but in bud. Christ alone is absolutely perfect. He is “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.” To his bitterest enemies his challenge is, “Which of you convinceth me of sin?” He never did an injury, and never resented one done to him; never uttered an untruth, never practiced a deception, and never lost an opportunity of doing good; generous in the midst of the selfish, upright in the midst of the dishonest, pure in the midst of the sensual, and wise for above the wisest of earth’s sages and philosophers; loving and gentle, yet immovably resolute, and whose illimitable meekness and patience never once forsook him in a vexatious, ungrateful, and cruel world. O Tree of Perfect Beauty! fairest of all the trees in the garden of God! angels gaze upon thee with unceasing rapture, and the redeemed before the throne praise thee with a voice as the sound of many waters!

5. Consider the *shade* of this tree.

Some trees are valued because of their shade. Flinging wide their branches, they afford a delightful retreat from the heat, and a shelter from the storm. How often in summer have we sought some spreading oak or drooping elm,

and recruited our exhausted energies while resting beneath its cool shade! Far from house, with no habitation near, and loud thunders reverberating over our heads, and lightnings flashing along our path, and the swift rain-drops blinding our vision, we have found the adjacent forest a convenient refuge, where we have remained until the sky cleared and the tempest ceased. Christ, the Tree of Life, also offers a refreshing shade. He says: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." Are we burdened with poverty? he will give us contentment; are we weary with sickness? he will give us acquiescence; are we oppressed with temptations? he will give us strength; are we overwhelmed with bereavement? he will give us fortitude; are we fatigued with age? he will give us hope. From no other source can we derive such cheer. We might betake ourselves to other trees—the riches, honors, and pleasures of life—and while reclining under their green boughs and fragrant blossoms we might realize some measure of comfort and repose; but ere-long we should find them to be as Jonah's gourd—sufficient while our trials were as the sultry breath of morning, but too frail to screen us from the fierce rays of the ascending sun. There is no rest like that to be found in Jesus. Away from the shade of the Tree of Life, and remembering its delightfulness, the psalmist exclaimed, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee!" Christ affords not only repose, but protection. "Here the persecuted find a place of refuge from the evils of the world, and the tempted a retreat from their spiritual enemies." "Whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe." Many a tree has but attracted the lightning which has riven its trunk, and smitten with death those who had taken refuge beneath its boughs. But no harm can befall those who abide under the shadow of Christ. It is "the

shadow of the Almighty.” “If God be for us, who can be against us?” Says David: “Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation, there shall no evil befall thee.” Men may rise against us; devils may seek our destruction; but they are powerless before the Lord, nor can they inflict a real injury on those who trust in him. I have seen the storm shaking the forest, and in the midst of its fury I have looked up and seen the tiny birds perched among the trees, undisturbed by the raging elements. So, in the midst of the most deadly opposition we may be serene and cheerful, if reposing on the love of Christ.

6. Consider the *fruit* of this tree.

Some trees are prized for their fruit—the date and the olive, the fig and the pomegranate, the almond and the peach, the apple and the orange, and many others with which our orchards and fields have long made us familiar. The fruit of some is esteemed for its flavor, of others for its delicious fragrance, of others for its wholesomeness, of others for its adaptation to purposes of general utility. The Tree of Life is also fruitful, and the fruit of this tree has a combination of merits possessed by no other. It is distinguished by the most wonderful variety. Other trees, unless artificial means are employed, produce but one kind of fruit; but the fruit of this tree is of so many different kinds that it is impossible to enumerate them. Its fruit is as varied as are the blessings to be enjoyed in time and in eternity. “Godliness is profitable unto all things; having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” On the nearer and lower branches we discover pardon, purity, joy, peace, love, hope. But the tree towers, and the topmost boughs are beyond our sight, and we must scale the heavens and gaze upon the bliss of the renewed before we can describe “the riches of our inheritance in

Christ." This fruit is distinguished not only for its rich variety, but also for its abundance. It matters not how many may come to the Tree of Life, or how often they may come, there is always a sufficiency for all. Millions have partaken of this tree, but its boughs are as thickly laden to-day as when they were bent by the first of our race. The fruit is independent of seasons. It is just as plentiful in winter as in summer. It is always ripe. It never decays. It never falls. In childhood, in manhood, in old age, in the time of affliction, in the hour of death, it may be found in all its perfection. This fruit is also distinguished for its singular accessibility. The fruit of some trees is abundant, but between us and its enjoyment may be rolling seas and scorching sands. The only barrier between us and the fruit of the Tree of Life, is our unbelief. We have only to put forth the hand of faith, and instantly we grasp it. "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." This fruit is distinguished for its sweetness. Said a converted heathen: "I have tasted honey in my own land, and sugar in the white man's land; but there is nothing half so sweet as the love of Jesus." Said Mr. Cheyne, of Scotland: "I have tasted all the pleasures of sin, but they were not near so sweet as one drop of Christ's pure love." "What are you doing?" said a minister, as he one day visited a feeble old man, who dwelt in a windy hovel; "What are you doing?" as he saw him sitting beneath the dripping rafters in his smoky chamber, with his Bible upon his knee. "O sir! I am sitting under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit is sweet to my taste!" So sweet is it that in the midst of the bitterest sorrow it fills the soul with rapture, and often

inspires the tongue to shout aloud its praises. This fruit is also distinguished for its remarkable virtues. In ancient times the balm of Gilead was famed for its medicinal qualities, and in our own times there are many trees which are prized for similar properties; but the fruit of the Tree of Life can do what no other tree can effect—it can rid us of the virus of sin; it can remove the leprosy, the plague of our hearts. O the moral transformation which follows the partaking of this precious fruit! The eyes of our understanding are enlightened, and then we can discern the glory of God; our ears, long so dull, are unstopped, so that we catch celestial harmonies; our feet, once so halt, have strength and suppleness put into them, so that we run the way of the divine commandments; every spiritual faculty is invigorated; we are new creatures in Christ Jesus.

We have now considered the various perfections of the Tree of Life. Is there any tree in all the universe to be compared with this tree? Where could we better rest than underneath its far-spreading boughs? Brethren, never forsake this tree. Keep under its blessed shadow; contemplate its unfading beauty; trust in its eternal strength; partake of its golden fruit. To abandon it is to perish. It is to expose yourselves to the shafts of the second death, and to the torments of a burning hell.

Those of you who have never sat under the shadow of this tree—never partaken of its fruit—I would urge to flee to it at once. Here is safety; here is happiness; here is everlasting life.

SERMON VI.

THE WOMAN OF CANAAN

"Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt." (Matt. xv. 28.)

OUR Lord had now reached the meridian of his fame, and vast multitudes followed him from place to place. "He could not be hid." "Departing into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon," he was met by a woman of Canaan who applied to him in behalf of her daughter, who was "grievously vexed with a devil."

Demonic possessions, now unknown, seem to have been common at that period. Satan and his hosts, in token of their authority, frequently seized on the human faculties, producing the most direful consequences, both physical and mental. There was but One on earth who could dislodge them. Wielding divine power, Christ, on numberless occasions, evinced his compassion by casting them out, and delivering men from their cruel and destructive dominion. When solicited in the instance before us, he seems, for the first time in his history, unwilling to grant the request. Reverential as was the poor woman's address, touching as was the tale of her woe, "he answered her not a word." We must not construe this silence into indifference; we may rest assured none sympathized with the suppliant more tenderly than the Saviour; as we shall speedily see, he only desired to test the strength of her faith. Observing that she still continued her pleading, and perceiving from her countenance how deep was her distress, the disciples step forward and assist her with their intercessions. Having

witnessed the mighty miracles which their Master had already performed, and persuaded that there was no difficulty which he could not remove, and no enemy which he could not subdue, they besought him, saying, "Send her away; for she crieth after us." But he answered and said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." This statement was most true; for our Lord's personal ministry was more especially designed for the benefit of the Jews, and it was not until after his death that the commission was given, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." But undismayed by his reply to his disciples, the woman drew near "and worshiped him, saying, Lord, help me." But as though unmoved, notwithstanding her lowly attitude and tearful entreaty, the Saviour answered, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." This contemptuous epithet was applied by the Jews to the Gentile nations on account of their polluting and degrading idolatries, and our Lord employed it not with the intention of giving it his sanction, but simply as a proverbial expression adapted to serve his purpose on the present occasion. The woman, far from resenting this reproachful allusion, replied: "Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." "Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilst."

My friends, this whole narrative is exceedingly interesting, and with a little care we may elicit from it some important and profitable lessons.

1. It should teach us, first, to *diligently improve our religious advantages.*

Is it not surprising to find this poor woman at the feet of Jesus? For consider who she was, and how many difficulties strewed the path of her approach to the Saviour. She

was a Canaanite; not one of the chosen people, but a descendant of an apostate and proscribed race. In all probability it had never been her privilege to peruse a copy of the sacred Word. She had been nurtured in heathenism; accustomed from youth to scenes of cruelty, superstition, and vice; and up to the time that she first heard of Jesus, we have every reason to believe that her principles and practice were in strict conformity with her early education. It was then as a prejudiced heathen that she heard of the Saviour. It may be that some traveler from Judea, pausing a moment at her door to refresh his fevered lips, noticed the sad condition of her daughter, and kindly informed the afflicted parent of the Prophet of Nazareth, and of his many wonderful works. But with her pagan predilections, and knowledge of Jewish pride, this intelligence would be by no means the most likely to bring her to Jesus; for after the stranger's departure, the thought would naturally arise: "Is not the prophet a Jew, and am not I a Gentile? and this being the case, what likelihood is there, if I go to him, that he will show mercy to me, of a race whom this people abhor?" Furthermore, she might argue: "Perhaps this stranger has exaggerated the prophet's power; possibly he is only envious of the fame of our gods, and would exalt the Nazarene above them." Such might have been her objections; but if so, it is evident she did not allow them to control her long. "There is in faith a sound logic, just as in earnestness there is a deep divination." News soon reached her that our Lord had entered "the coasts of Tyre and Sidon;" and to her everlasting renown, notwithstanding she had never seen him perform a miracle, notwithstanding she had strong reasons to fear that he would deny her request, yet, weighing well all she had heard respecting him, she came to the conclusion that he must be a Being of unlimited power and love; and sup-

ported by this conclusion she went forth and with confidence applied for mercy.

My unconverted friends, be admonished by this poor Canaanite. Learn from her to diligently improve your religious advantages. Few were her advantages as compared with yours. You have been blessed with a religious education. Perhaps you were privileged with a father's counsels and with a mother's prayers. Though they sleep in the dust, you still have at your command an open Bible. Sermons ring on your ear Sabbath after Sabbath. Kind friends expostulate with you, and to their efforts in your behalf the Holy Spirit adds his gracious drawings and promptings. You have no reason, like the woman of Canaan, to doubt either the power or the love of the Saviour. You know full well that he is "a refuge, a present help in trouble." Miracles have been performed all around you. You have seen hardened and abandoned sinners, burdened with guilt, prostrate themselves at the feet of Jesus, and rise renewed, ennobled, and free. You cannot question the reality of their conversion. You see them placed in situations of trial, and to your astonishment they remain immovable "as rocks left by the ebbing tide." You stand by their bedside and watch them die; and as the shadows of the dark valley creep around them, you catch their whisperings of rejoicing hope; you hear them tell of a light that streams beyond, of harps and crowns, of many mansions, and of bliss for evermore.

Yet, with all these advantages, you still remain "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." Why, O why such egregious folly? Why hasten you not to that Saviour who can deliver you from the dominion of Satan and confer on you the glorious liberty of the sons of God? Why harbor any longer the demon of sin, and suffer your poor souls to be tortured and torn by its pitiless power?

What excuse can you give for your indifference at the final bar? Shut your eyes to it as you may, the judgment is before you; all humanity presses on to the grand crisis; and appalling must be your future should you appear there in your present corrupt and unsanctified state. O I tell you, I would rather be one of those wretched millions who were swept away by that desolating flood, which came upon the earth and overflowed the tops of the tallest mountains; rather be one of those sons of Sodom and Gomorrah, upon whom descended heaven's torrent of fire, and over whose graves the Dead Sea now rolls its solemn requiem; rather be one of those arrogant Assyrians, who, defying the Most High, encamped against the beloved city, and while dreaming of blood and booty, fell a prey to the angel of death; rather be one of those haughty Babylonians, who, while worshiping the gods of gold and of silver, were startled by the finger of doom, and the same night surrounded and smitten by Persian swords; rather be one of those vile Jews, who rejected our Saviour, plotted against his life, and securing his condemnation, with cruel insult led him away to die; yea, believe me, rather be Judas himself, in the day of judgment, than to stand there guilty and unforgiven, after having enjoyed the unparalleled privileges of this present time. Had they enjoyed these privileges, they might have repented in sack-cloth and ashes.

2. This narrative should teach us, secondly, *the true design of affliction.*

We have noticed the obstacles which stood in the way of this poor woman's approach to the Saviour. Formidable as they were, she rose above them all and hastened to fling herself a suppliant at his feet. But here it should be observed that had it not been for her affliction she might never have made this visit. The malady of her daughter

was such as to awaken her deepest solicitude. To have had her child the victim of some insidious and incurable disease incident to humanity would have been distressing enough; but that she should be possessed of a devil, how fearful! Like the wrecked voyager cast on some bleak and desolate island, far out in mid-ocean, her eyes were forever roving in search of some friendly aid. And when at last she heard of the approach of Jesus, and remembered what had been told her of his wondrous deeds and overflowing sympathy and love, the hope of sharing his mercy, and once more seeing her daughter in the enjoyment of health and peace, operated as an incentive to dismiss her doubts and make immediate application. Had she never known trouble, had her lot on earth been one of unalloyed happiness, had she been blessed with domestic felicity—with no wind to ruffle and no cloud to darken the river of her peace—she might have heard of the Saviour, and frequently had her curiosity aroused to see so wonderful a personage, but the probability is that she would have remained at home, and lived and died a heathen.

Few of us, my friends, sufficiently appreciate affliction; yet we may rest assured that all our sorrows are appointed or permitted for wise and salutary purposes. He who reigns over us is not a malignant tyrant, but a kind and benevolent parent. It is in mercy, rather than in anger, that we are smitten. God desires our eternal happiness; and affliction should be viewed as part of that discipline by which he would make us “meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.” In the economy of grace, salvation is to be found in Christ alone; hence, affliction is designed to lead us to him. And, my friends, do not judge it unnecessary. Sad to say, there is in the human heart a natural aversion to Christ. Whether this is exhibited in the most open and skeptical rejection of his laws, or whether it be

concealed under the punctilio ness of mere outward compliance, the principle is the same: we will not submit to his authority, we will not tender to him our affections, we will love the creature more than the Creator, and in spite of protest and warning, "hew out for ourselves cisterns, broken cisterns, which can hold no water." Gracious, then, is the severest stroke, if the means of subduing our pride, and prostrating us as humble suppliants at the feet of Jesus. Such is the peculiar office of affliction. "Before I was afflicted," says the psalmist, "I went astray; but now have I kept thy word." Indeed, in some it seems impossible to awaken penitence and faith save by this instrumentality. Plant them on the heights of prosperity, and like certain seeds that we have known, years may pass and no impression be made on the hard outer shell of worldliness which incrusts them. Like the same seed, they must be sown by sighing streams, far down in the deep secluded vale, and then they will germinate and grow up into trees of unrivaled stature and beauty. Prize affliction, then, when allotted you. Placed in this school, you will, if diligent and faithful, learn lessons which you might never have learned elsewhere. Taught the evil of sin, the vanity of the creature, and the importance of constant preparation for death, step by step you will be conducted to that Saviour who alone can give you "the promise of eternal life." What would have been the condition of many professed Christians of to-day had they never been afflicted? It was the swell of the ocean which drove you to the open port; it was the thirst of the desert which led you to the fountains of living water; it was the tramp of the destroyer, Death, and the gleam of his quivering spear, which sped you to the sanctuary of the Rock of ages. To you may be applied the words of the prophet: "Lord, in trouble have they visited thee; they poured out a prayer when

thy chastening was upon them." Even after conversion, affliction is frequently necessary to arouse us to seek a more intimate and thorough acquaintance with the Saviour. Pardon of sin and some progress in the divine life do not of themselves save us from occasionally subsiding into a self-satisfied state. We are told of eagles that the parent birds, on finding their young loath to fly, procure thorns, which they fix in their nest, and thus compel them to arise. Even so our Heavenly Father, finding us sluggish and indifferent—more intent on our own ease than advancement in grace—pierces us with afflictions, to the end that we may abandon our inglorious rest, "mount up with wings as eagles, run and not be weary, and walk and not faint."

Dear friends, when afflicted regard it as a call to seek the Saviour. Do not murmur at it as a needless yoke. Do not try to shake it off by rushing into gay society or sipping of the sparkling bowl; nor seek relief, as do many, in light literature or in foreign scenes. Have recourse to Jesus. Betake yourselves to prayer, encouraged by the gracious assurance, "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." Remember that it is a law "that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." The most illustrious saints who now wave the unfading palm in the heavenly city are those who "endured hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ." As in the natural, so in the spiritual world:

The roots of fairest bloom lie sometimes hidden
The deepest underneath the soil; the stones
Of purest crystal are from gloomiest mines;
The tenderest pearls are won from roughest seas;
And stars of colors dipped in Iris splendors
Beam from unfathomable distances
Ere they disclose their radiance.

3. Observe, this narrative should teach us, thirdly, *to labor earnestly and perseveringly for the salvation of sinners.*

What efforts did this poor woman make to procure relief for her afflicted child! We have already seen what difficulties she encountered and overcame before reaching the Saviour. But severe trials are in store for her. No sooner has she come into his presence than she ventures, in sad, tremulous tones, to give utterance to her plea: "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David! my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." But with what result? "*He answered her not a word.*" How discouraging! Conceive, if you can, the pang she must have felt on finding herself thus unregarded. No doubt she had left her home entertaining the most exalted views of the Jewish prophet. On her way she had buoyed up her faith and beguiled her loneliness by reflecting on the many notable miracles he had wrought. She thought, perhaps, on the blind man who had called to him, and whose sight he had restored by a word; she thought, it may be, of the widow of Nain, and his recalling her son from the bier on which he was being borne to the grave. And thus, strengthened and encouraged, she approached the Saviour, expecting that he would at once hear and answer her petition. Does she now abandon hope, and, turning away in despair, retrace her steps to that lonely cottage where writhes her afflicted daughter? Many would; but not she. Speeding after the Saviour, she resumes and repeats her cry, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David!" Still there is no response. At last, either wearied by her importunity, or sympathizing with her distress, the disciples intercede in her behalf. "Send her away," they entreat, "for she crieth after us." Poor woman! on hearing this her hopes expand, but—as the sequel proves—only as tender buds that fanned by deceitful gales put forth their leaves in early spring, to see them nipped by some untimely frost. Turning, abruptly, to his disciples, our Lord replied, with apparent asperity, "I am

not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” Does this satisfy her of the futility of her request? Brave heart! no. Her affection, like a fertilizing sun, again quickens the still purposes of her heart. “Then came she and worshiped him, saying, Lord, help *me*.” “Is it true that thou art sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel? O let thy mercy overflow! Help me!” “But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children’s bread and to cast it to dogs.” Is she satisfied of the hopelessness of her case now? Surely she might be. What, spurned from his feet as a dog! But her faith is like that of Job, when he said, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.” Where others would have seen naught but absolute and unequivocal denial—a midnight without a star—she descries the pale harbinger of day. Soaring on the storm that would have beaten down feebler faith, through the grim canopy of clouds, she sees rays in reserve, ready to burst from the broad, bright bosom of the Sun of righteousness. Like honey in the bare brown rock, like jewels in the deep, dark cave, hope hides in our Lord’s stern figure. “Truth, Lord,” she says, “it is not meet to take the children’s bread and cast it to the dogs, *yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.*”

The persevering prayer of faith prevailed. His gracious purpose accomplished—the development of her faith—our Lord dropped his disguise and disclosed himself in all his unutterable sympathy and love. He exclaimed, “O woman, great is thy faith! *be it unto thee even as thou wilt.*”

Brethren, shall we not profit by this example of successful supplication? Multitudes around us, if not demoniacs in the sense of the daughter of the Canaanite, are nevertheless subjects of the evil one, and the victims of his power. Some of them are our acquaintances, our friends, our nearest relatives. Shall we be idle? Was not this the pur-

pose for which the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil? Has he not all power in heaven and in earth? And is it not his pleasure to put special honor upon human sympathy and prayers? Yes, the keys of deliverance have been left, to a considerable extent, in our keeping. With us it is to increase indefinitely the privileges, and, by consequence, the chances for salvation of the unconverted around us. Again I ask, Can we be idle? Alas that so many fail to realize the magnitude of their responsibility in this respect! Would God that I could arouse such from their awful apathy! Is it not the command of Heaven addressed to each, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself?" Are not all the examples held up in Scripture for our imitation distinguished for their love of men? See Abraham interceding for guilty and polluted Sodom. Listen to Moses as he pleads for the children of Israel: "O this people have sinned a great sin! Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of the book which thou hast written." Hearken to David: "Rivers of water run down mine eyes, because men keep not thy law." And hear the weeping Jeremiah, as he bemoans the iniquity of his people: "O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!"

Then, my brethren, labor for the salvation of souls. Labor for the salvation of your children, your neighbors, and all with whom you are associated. Especially labor for them by diligent and fervent prayer. And be not discouraged if at any time success seems doubtful. "Weary not in well-doing." Remember the woman of Canaan, and take courage. Delays are not denials. Sow your seed, and hope for the harvest; trim your lamp, and watch for the Master's coming; unfurl your sails, and as you bound over

the billow, believe you are near the haven. “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much”—*how much?* who can tell? Well said the poet, “More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of.” O the efficacy, the power of prayer! Prayer can widen the way to the wicket of mercy, and impart fresh energy to struggling sinners; prayer can anoint them with the oil of gladness, and turn their mourning into joy; prayer can deck them with a beauty beyond that of earth, and clothe them with a robe like that which angels wear; prayer can level the mountains and uplift the valleys, and make smooth the rough places which lie in their subsequent path. Ah, brethren, what wonders has prayer wrought! It has healed the sick; it has raised the dead; it has won victories over all the elements of nature. Fire, air, earth, water, have all been yoked to its triumphant car. Prayer divided the Red Sea; prayer consumed Elijah’s sacrifice; prayer “arrested the sun in his course, and stayed the wheels of the chariot of the moon.”

Up, then, O Christian, and live for something besides self! Labor, like the woman of Canaan, for the welfare of others. Kneel, plead, agonize for the salvation of men, and falter not, but be patient and persevering. “Let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.” “They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars forever and ever.”

SERMON VII.

THE GREAT WHITE THRONE.

“And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man according to their works.” (Rev. xx. 11-13.)

JOHN saw in vision what we shall yet see in dread reality. The scene is described to us that we may prepare for it; and surely we must be insensible indeed, if it fail to awaken our awe and to excite our apprehension.

Let us detach our thoughts from what is simply sublunary, and for a brief while ponder the picture here presented by the inspired seer.

1. *The throne* is the first object which arrests attention. “I saw a great white throne.”

The throne is the seat of royal authority. The authority of which this throne is the center is absolute and universal. It extends to every department of creation; it reaches to the remotest bounds of immensity. The tiniest insect is under its control; the loftiest archangel is subject to its sway. The thrones of earth exercise a limited authority, and are liable to be subverted; this throne is immovable. No revolutions can shake it; the waves of opposition may dash themselves against it, but “the Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters—yea, than the

mighty waves of the sea." Time, the destroyer of so many thrones, is powerless here. The eternal years serve but to unfold its grandeur and to reveal its strength. It is, in a sense which belongs to no other, "a great throne." There is something in the color of this throne which is worthy of notice. It is described as "a great *white* throne." What is indicated by this snowy splendor? What but the spotless purity, the untarnished rectitude of Him who is its occupant? "A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of his kingdom." It is right that he should have dominion. His throne is his exclusive property. His government is not a usurpation. "It is of old, even from everlasting." Where is the earthly throne that was not originally set up by violence or fraud? Where is the human dynasty that can base its prerogative on inherent right? The administration of this throne, moreover, has been unblemished. Few are the earthly thrones that have not been stained by cruelty or oppression. Crimson would be their appropriate color. But the strictest equity has marked this throne; every act, every procedure that has emanated from it has been inspired by the profoundest wisdom and directed to the noblest ends. Who can impeach the conduct of the Most High? who bring a railing accusation against any feature of his government? Like a fog which rises from the earth and obscures the sun, the limitations of human reason may, in some cases, cause "clouds and darkness" to be "round about him;" still, "righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." "The Lord our God is holy." He is so essentially; he is so unchangeably. "He cannot be tempted with evil." He is not "a God that hath pleasure in wickedness." O the immaculate holiness of Him who sitteth upon the throne of the universe! The vault of heaven in its pellucid brightness, unflecked by a solitary cloud, undimmed by the slightest vapor, is but a faint em-

blem of his transcendent purity. "Behold even to the moon, and it shineth not; yea, the stars are not pure in his sight." "A God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he."

2. Leaving the throne, as suggestive of the majesty and purity of its occupant, let us now contemplate *the Judge himself*. "Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away."

At first we might suppose that it is the Deity, in his spiritual essence, devoid of any form or shape, who here appears to execute judgment. It is God, indeed, who shall judge the world. "As I live," saith the Lord, "every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So, then, every one of us shall give account of himself to God." But while this is so, we learn from other passages of Scripture that it is God Incarnate, that Divine Son who in human form shares with the Father the sovereignty of the universe, who shall officiate at the last day as the Supreme Arbiter of the destinies of men. "The Father," we are told, "judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." "It is he," it is said, "which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead." And again, with equal explicitness, it is declared, "God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ." Looking now more closely at the portraiture of the text, see we not in it a confirmation of the fact that it is Christ who shall judge the world? "From whose *face*," it is said, "the earth and the heaven fled away." To whom does this expression so appropriately and forcibly apply as to the Second Person in the Trinity? he "who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in *the likeness of men*?" Yes, it is from the face of the glorified Saviour, from the kindling glance of

that countenance which shineth as the sun, that the earth and the heaven flee away.

In the arrangement by which the Divine Son is assigned the office of Universal Judge, there is the most exquisite fitness. His human nature, since its assumption, constitutes an integral part of his being. It was in that human nature that he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. And it is but just that in that same nature he should be exalted and vindicated as "very and eternal God." What could so completely roll away every reproach that has been cast upon him? what could so decisively demonstrate his Godhead as his visible enthronement in majesty and power, to adjudicate the destiny of the myriads of mankind? The thought of this vindication sustained him when arraigned before the Jewish sanhedrim. When the high-priest adjured him to tell them whether he was the Christ the Son of God, he answered, "Thou hast said;" and then, as if conscious of the seeming incongruity between the lowliness of his circumstances and the loftiness of his claim, he added: "Nevertheless, I say unto you, hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right-hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." There is mercy to us as well as justice to him in the arrangement. It affords comfort to the pious to know that they are to be judged by one who, while possessing all the attributes of Deity, has also a human experience. Surely he will judge the people righteously; he will not exact aught that is above our capacity; he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust. To the wicked, indeed, though guaranteeing the equity of their sentence, it will be no ground of consolation that Christ is to be their Judge. They would prefer any face to that adown which trickled the blood-drops of redemption, and over which, for their sake, stole the pallor of death! As

they look on him whom they have pierced, they will wail because of him; the memory of his mighty love will awaken deepest anguish. As they recall his sufferings and death, his precepts and promises, his warnings and entreaties, his long-suffering and tender mercy, and think that all has been rendered fruitless by their obstinacy and impenitence, they will call on rocks to fall on them, and on mountains to hide them “from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.”

“I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away.” Who can read these words without drawing a contrast between his first and second advent? Quiet and unimposing was his first appearance. Only now and then, during his eventful stay, was the veil lifted and his glory seen—“the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father.” As a babe, he was born in poverty and nursed in exile; as a youth, he was the reputed son of a humble carpenter; as a man, he was the Nazarene, and finally, the Crucified! It will not be thus when he shall appear “the second time.” He shall “come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him.” Who can imagine that glory? As though affrighted, the earth and the heavens will flee away. Whether, indeed, the whole material economy will be dissolved, we cannot say. It may be so. We know not what subtle affinities, moral as well as physical, may subsist between the different worlds which lie scattered through immensity. The crisis of our world may be the crisis of all worlds. The catastrophe, however, may be comparatively limited. It may embrace only our planetary system, or it may be confined simply to our own orb. Even if the latter, as a sign of the Son of man, it will be to us none the less terrible. How can it detract from the awfulness of the scene to know that countless stars are holding their course, while our own is

rushing back into primeval night? Were the destruction ever so extensive, it could not impress us more deeply than the dissolution of our own sphere. O how “men’s hearts will fail them for fear” when they shall see the mountains falling; the rocks rending, the seas evaporating, the proudest works of man consuming, the whole globe, with all that pertains to it, sinking into nothingness!

3. From the Judge, with the dread circumstances which will mark his advent, let us now turn to consider *the multitude* that will be assembled at his tribunal. “I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God.”

“*The dead!*” What an assembly will that be! How many have already died! What countless throngs have been subjected to “the bondage of corruption!” We think of the antediluvian world; we think of nations now utterly extinct, every memorial of them perished; we think of cities which rose in pride and splendor, and whose streets resounded with the hum of business or the voice of pleasure, now in ruins—their stillness and solitude rarely invaded by a human footstep; we think of battle-fields, with their heaps of slain; of cemeteries with their sculptured monuments and their nameless tombs; of the graves which strew the surface of our earth, and over which we tread, little dreaming that underneath us is the dust of men. “*The dead!*” But the word will embrace all who now live; for “what man is he that liveth, and shall not see death?” It will include every generation that will yet be called into existence. Even those who shall be alive at the coming of the Lord will undergo a change equivalent to death. O this mighty concourse! Imagination in vain attempts to conceive it. We may bring arithmetic to our help, but the mind refuses to keep pace with the swelling figures. The hosts of Xerxes, the battalions of Alexander, the legions of Cæsar, the hordes of Tamerlane and Genghis Khan, are

but as specks in the vast assembly. “The dead, *small and great.*” The infant, who faded like a vernal blossom; the man who went down to his grave in a full age, like a shock of corn which cometh in its season. “The dead, *small and great!*” All, irrespective of former distinctions, whether natural or conventional. It matters not what may have been our color, what our nationality, what our pedigree, what our position. The shivering Icelander, as well as the dweller in soft tropic isles; the rude barbarian and the polished sage; the cowled monk and the resolute apostle; the crafty politician and the unblemished patriot; tyrants who made the earth to tremble, and captives who wept in exile and groaned under the oppressor’s rod; rich and poor; mendicants and monarchs—all, all will stand before God.

As though unable to withdraw his thoughts from the mighty multitude which he saw under such solemn circumstances, the apostle, after describing the further proceedings of the judgment, returns to specify the sources which shall unite to make up the assembly.

“The sea gave up the dead which were in it.” Who has not sighed when reflecting on the ravages of the deep? The sea has been styled “a hidden Golgotha.” What millions have been engulfed by its remorseless waves! What a thrilling tale is that of shipwreck! The storm, the midnight crash upon unsuspected rocks; the mad waves rushing in to take possession of their prey; the shrieks that rend the air; the gurgling agony; and then the lone black waste where an hour ago sped the noble vessel with her human freight! Ah! and there are other tales of ocean’s wrath: its inundations, when, leaping its ancient boundaries, or the barriers created by human art, it has overwhelmed cities, and spread death and desolation in its march! . Cruel, treacherous, insatiable as it is, its caverns shall be rifled of their spoil; the sea shall give up its dead.

“And *death* and *hell* delivered up the dead which were in them.” “*Death*”—a personification of the power of the grave, particularly as seen in the dry places of the earth. “*Hell*,” or *hades*—the invisible world, the place of departed spirits, including the region of happiness as well as misery. These two are represented as twin keepers, throwing open the doors of their respective prison-houses, and surrendering the prisoners they have so long held in custody. There is no possibility, therefore, that of all the myriads who have trod our globe there will be one missing at the judgment. Willing or unwilling, they will make their appearance. The bars of the sea will be unloosed; “the earth shall cast out the dead,” and from bowers of bliss and from wastes of woe each disembodied spirit will haste to repossess its former tenement. “There is no darkness nor shadow of death whence the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.” “We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.”

4. We will now consider, in conclusion, *the process* by which the destiny of this immense multitude will be determined. “The books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.”

This may be the language of metaphor, but it indicates under earthly images, the exactness, the equity, which will distinguish the proceedings. It will be necessary, in the first place, for the Judge to have before him all the facts connected with each individual. And there will be the book of remembrance—his own omniscience. Long ago, in the days of his flesh, he gave proof of possessing this perfection. Saw he not Nathanael under the fig-tree? read he not the inmost thoughts of the Pharisee? drew he not from his disciples the confession, “Now are we sure that

thou knowest all things?" From the infallible pages of his infinite memory he will derive the history of all who shall be summoned to answer at his bar. His knowledge of us will be perfect, extending not only to our acts, but also to our desires and purposes; not only to our words, but to our very thoughts and imaginations. "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil!" Ah! little as some of you may think it, your whole life will meet you again at the judgment! I remember reading of an artist, who, in the late war between France and Germany, when the Communists were destroying the column in the Place de Vendome, took instantaneous views of the act. All the features of the guilty actors being present in the negative, they were brought to light by the use of the solar microscope, and the ruthless iconoclasts were recognized, brought to justice, and condemned through this instrumentality. Just so is our life being photographed by an invisible Agent, and its minutest details are destined to confront us at the bar of God. It is important that this testimony of the book of remembrance be corroborated; and for this there is the book of human memory. It is true that now memory is weak and unreliable. Much that we once knew we have forgotten; there are names and scenes and circumstances which we frequently strive in vain to recall; but we must not conclude from this that any fact once entertained by the mind is ever obliterated. Persons who have narrowly escaped shipwreck have said that when the vessel struck the fatal rock their whole life stood up in sunlight before them." At the judgment, memory will be released from its present weakness. It will find itself in possession of every fact that once occupied the mind; and its record will correspond precisely with the register of the Divine remembrance.

“And the books were opened.” How shall the merit or demerit of the individuals composing this vast assembly be estimated?

There will be the book of nature. From this volume all have been instructed; it teaches the existence of God and “his eternal power and Godhead.” Idolatry, or any want of reverence for the Deity, will be unsparingly condemned by this volume.

There will be the book of the moral law. The substance of this law is universally known. Even where it has never been given in a written form it is found stamped on the human heart; conscience bearing witness of its requirements, and “accusing or else excusing,” as its precepts are resisted or obeyed. This law will condemn every infraction of pure love, every divergence from that holy affection which should bind us to our Creator and to one another. Those hard thoughts of God which we sometimes cherish, that dislike of his ways which we sometimes manifest; our hatred of our fellows, the injustice we practice toward them, the slightest unkindness we show them—all will be declared culpable by this exalted standard.

There will be the book of the gospel. Said Christ to the scornful, impenitent hearer of his word: “The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.” The gospel is the clearest revelation of the character of God and of our duty toward him with which mankind has ever been favored. In addition to this it tells of salvation; it points out the way by which we may obtain the remission of sins and justification at the last day. Neglect of its teachings, disobedience to its mandates, will fearfully augment the guilt of all to whom it has been proclaimed.

“And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books.”

There will be some who had no more for their guidance

than the volume of nature and the moral law as learned from tradition and interpreted by conscience. There will be others who, in conjunction with the teachings of nature and the revelations of the moral law, enjoyed the clearer discoveries of the gospel. But whether it be the heathen or the Christian world, whether it be those who lived in the dim twilight of nature, or those who basked in the full-orbed splendor of the gospel, we are bold to say that none will be found who have fully met their responsibilities, be they great or small. "Every mouth will be stopped, and all the world guilty before God."

Is there then no escape? Must the Judge launch his dread thunderbolts upon all, without exception? Must I, must you, perish? Blessed be God, there looms up "a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest!"

"And another book was opened, which is the book of life." This book contains the names of the saved. The saved are those who at some point in their history began to serve God to the extent of their acquaintance with his will, and, though guilty of occasional obliquities, trusted in his mercy for forgiveness, and persevered in their attempt to please him. Of the saved will be many from heathen as well as from Christian lands. "They shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God." "God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted with him."

"And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."

The works of all, the saved as well as the unsaved, will undergo inspection. In the case of the former, their works will be examined as the evidence of their faith, and as the measurement of their reward. It is faith,

trust in God, and God in Christ, when revealed—that secures a place in “the book of life.” But this faith is a vital principle, appropriating—consciously in the case of Christians, unconsciously in the case of the heathen—the grace which flows from the atonement of Christ, and discovering itself by works of righteousness. It will be ascertained how far we have demonstrated our faith by obedience to the light with which we have been blessed. Then our works, as springing from faith, will be the basis of rewards. And here there will be discrimination and distinction. “He that sowed bountifully shall reap bountifully; and he that sowed sparingly shall reap also sparingly.” The works of the wicked will be also weighed as proving their want of faith, and determining the degree of their future punishment. Their unbelief will consign them to perdition; but the evil deeds they have added to their unbelief will increase the severity of their doom. Says the apostle: “Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? but, after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.”

In conclusion. Remember that the decisions of the judgment will be final. There is no other court to which we can appeal; this is the highest tribunal in the universe. “Whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.” From that lake there is no deliverance. Wide as may be its area, it is walled in by cliffs which afford no foothold for escape, and which are as strong and lasting as the Eternal God. “The breath of the Lord like a stream of brimstone doth kindle it.” Rescue is impossible. The strongest life-boat, though fashioned by angelic hands, would instantly be crushed by the

buffetings of those fiery waves. “This is the second death.” God forbid that any of us should have our “part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone!” Be warned, O sinner, to repent! “Prepare to meet thy God!” “O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness; fear before him; for he cometh, he cometh to judge the world!”

SERMON VIII.

THE RIVER OF GRACE.

“There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High.” (Ps. xlvi. 4.)

SCRIPTURE abounds with figurative language as a well-watered garden with the tints of the rainbow, as the wave-washed shore with variegated pebbles and shells, and as night’s royal robe with gems more lustrous than gold. From first to last, from the God of Genesis to the Amen of the Apocalypse, waves this imaginative harvest. Stalkless spots indeed appear on the wide-extended plain, but they are as earth’s famines—few and far between. They serve as resting-places for the bending reaper—termini where he may wipe his dripping brow, sharpen his sickle, and prepare for fresh labors and spoils.

Apart from its divine origin and the transcendent importance of its subjects, we believe it is to its tropical luxuriance that Scripture owes much of its ascendancy over men. Free truth of any kind from the chains of error, apparel it in nature’s “coat of many colors,” and let it be devoid of the mere tinsel of an exuberant fancy—it is almost sure to win the homage of the heart.

Recognizing this fact, the inspired writers have made creation a vestment in which to infold their mighty revelations. Like the swan on some still lake, each thought “floats double.” Do they speak of God? he is a sun and a shield; do they tell of his voice? it is the midnight thunder, the din of cataracts, and ocean’s warring waves; do they call attention to his mercies? they are firmer than the everlasting hills, and more in number than the sand; do they distinguish his own elect? they flourish as a palm-tree,

and grow as a cedar in Lebanon. But leviathan tossing in the deep, the ostrich fleeing in the desert, the wild roe skipping on the hill-tops, the rose blossoming in Sharon, the lily drooping in the valley, the olive and the vine, the balm of Gilead and the dew of Hermon, the darkness and the day-spring—all nature, has been summoned to pour its streaming splendors on the Bible. The sea has given up its pearls; the skies have contributed their stars; from field and from forest, from mountain and from mead, earth has hastened with her tribute. What is the result? Why, the compelling even the infidel Rousseau to exclaim: “The majesty of Scripture strikes me with admiration! Peruse the works of our philosophers, with all their pomp and diction, how contemptible are they when compared with Scripture! Is it possible that a book at once so simple and sublime should be the work of man?”

We deem these few remarks not inappropriate to the elucidation of the beautifully figurative language of the text. Here “the grace of God which bringeth salvation,” and which “maketh glad” the Church, is likened to a river; and to trace wherein this analogy consists, gathering instruction as we go, will be our object on this occasion.

Without descending to minute particulars—which would tend rather to perplex than make perspicuous the subject—we remark,

I. Grace, like a river, is small in its beginnings.

Far up among the hills scarce trodden by the foot of man, and where the eagle, peering forth from her lone aerie, is empress of all that she surveys, the river generally takes its rise. Not, however, from one immense fount, but from innumerable little springs which, overflowing their mossy sides, trickle adown the rocks, sleep awhile in the caves, then away to weep among the flowers and chant a requiem over buried stones, till, descrying each other in the distance,

their mourning turns to joy, and with a song of rapture they leap into each other's arms. Sweet emblem of divine grace! Scarcely perceptible when it first begins, but gathering fresh strength and momentum the farther it proceeds, it at length bursts from concealment, "and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race." How feeble seemed the promise given to Eden's erring pair, but how gloriously it swelled and shone ere it reached Calvary! How choked with sin was Moses's pious course when he imbrued his hands in Egyptian blood, but how high it rose when it lifted him "on Nebo's lonely mount!" How hid for a time was Peter's faith when, overcome by fear, he denied his Lord, but how bold and strong it had become when at last he reaped the crown of martyrdom! How many here can recall a period when they were but babes in Christ and seemingly walked in view of no great purpose, but now they feel that they have attained the stature of perfect men, and that none can stop them in their heaven-bound course! In this respect divine grace is analogous to not only one but all of God's works. Gradual development is the law of nature. Long before the sun has risen on the plain the peaks of the mountains gleam with a golden hue, and the clouds catch crimson in many an outstretched fold. The bud precedes the blossom, and the blossom the bending berry. First the seed, next the blade, and then the ripening grain. Yon giant oak, which now waves proudly to the gale and bids defiance to the winter storm, was once the merest sapling which a laughing school-boy could have broken. And spring—balmy and beautiful time—rushes not upon us in an instant, but with footstep soft and slow she comes, each day adding fresh beauty to the gardens and new minstrels to the groves.

Despair not then, my brother, because you are not so far advanced in grace as you may wish. Without doubt it is

costing you a terrible struggle to push your way along in the toilsome race and surmount the iron-ribbed rocks intrenched so firmly in your path. Many a weary pause do you make; often your hands hang down and your knees become feeble; but only press on, and you will "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Dews and showers from heaven will fall upon you; strength will come when least expected; your influence will widen and deepen the farther you proceed; men will gaze on you with wonder and delight; they will seek your society as parched travelers seek the refreshing stream; and when compelled to leave you it will be with eyes which flash with a brighter hope, and a step which you have made stronger and more elastic for the pilgrimage of life.

II. Grace, like a river, is devious in its course.

No river darts directly to the sea. Numerous are its windings and courses. We have read of a tall eminence in the distant west on which the traveler may stand and see the river which glides beneath him, after a sweep of thirty miles, return to within a short distance of the same spot. More or less circuitous is each river in its route. Now it passes through the waving corn-fields, and soft summer breezes fan its heated bosom; now the shadows of dense forests fall upon it, and its waters move in darkness and unbroken silence; now it emerges from its lone sepulcher, and rejoicing in the clear sunlight, betakes itself to the sweet valleys, whose very flowers seem to bid it welcome; now it meanders through some beautiful dell, whose trees on either side bend low to embrace and kiss it in its rapid flight; now it roams through some vast plain teeming with the haunts of busy men, and till midnight gay voyagers gaze with delight on the moonbeams mirrored in its placid depths; now morning breaks upon the bark it bore, and the river is ingulfed in ocean!

How distinct a portrait of divine grace! Regard we it as displayed in the stupendous scheme of redemption, how innumerable are the windings in its course! Issuing from a lost paradise, it rolled on for centuries amid antediluvian darkness, and scarce a solitary eye beheld it. The darkness past, it was described by Noah from the top of Ararat, flashing in the rainbow at his feet. Then Job caught sight of it in his desert home, and with a shout of triumph declared, "I know that my Redeemer liveth!" Then Abraham, in his far wanderings, "saw it and was glad." Then in Goshen, when Egyptian gloom was fast settling upon it, the hoary Jacob caught a glimpse of it and expired, satisfied that "the scepter should not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come." In after years David beheld it stealing through green pastures, and quaffing of its sparkling tide exclaimed, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil!" Isaiah met it when more than half its race was run, and with its destiny before him, lifted his voice and cried, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters!" And Malachi, standing in the full blaze of the ocean of redeeming love, cheered the desponding hearts of coming generations with the promise, "Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings."

The same grace displayed in individual life is more or less circuitous. Take, for example, the history of Joseph —a meek, inoffensive lad, the idol of his gray-haired sire, he is sold into Egypt by his brutal brethren, and made the bondsman of Potiphar. Time rolls on, and he is rapidly acquiring the esteem and confidence of his master, and sees liberty about to dawn upon him. Alas! a circumstance now occurs which dooms him to prison, and overcasts his rising hopes with deep, impenetrable clouds. Thus, while

“the iron enters his soul,” he languishes for years. But at length deliverance comes, and soon he is arrayed in the costume of a prince, and in all Egypt there is none his superior save the king. “Remember David and all his afflictions.” Proudly must his young heart have swelled within him as he saw the huge Philistine bow before his sling, and heard the heavens echo with the deafening shouts of his grateful and admiring countrymen. The path of honor and felicity now flashed before him, radiant as a sun-track. But scarcely is he exalted to a place in the king’s palace, and hardly have the acclamations of Israel’s applauding hosts died upon the breeze, than cruel envy seizes Saul’s soul, and crushing every generous impulse, drives the gallant shepherd to his native hills. Deep is his downfall, and sad the eclipse which seems to settle on his fortune. But now a few bold spirits, won by his bravery and piercing through the clouds which envelop his destiny, swear allegiance to the hero, and follow in his train. For years, however, he wanders in exile, with a price upon his head, and finds safety only in the caves of Idumea. And when, after Saul’s death the throne is secured to David, and the outlawed chief becomes the acknowledged king, how is his glory tempered with gloom, and what misfortunes does he meet with ere he falls asleep and is gathered to his fathers.

For additional examples we need not go beyond this assembly. Child of God, how many windings have there been in your life? Ah! you have been where the lightnings of affliction played around you and the hoarse thunder of the evil one shook the ground beneath you. You have passed through many a deep gorge of spiritual heaviness, where the shadow of surrounding rocks fell gloomily upon you; and you have been where “joy unspeakable” bloomed on every side, and where the light of heaven streamed full upon your face; and blessed be God, you still press on with

patience and hope, “counting not your own life dear to you, so that you may finish your course with joy.”

III. Grace, like a river, is open to all, without restriction or expense.

Like its parent, the ocean, the river asks no toll. From its start among the mountains, till lost in the sea, its voice, whether heard in the sound of many waters or in the whisper of the wave is, Come! See how the finny tribes sport upon its sides and chase the bubbles on its breast; watch the bird from afar lighting on its banks and sipping its salubrious waters; behold the tiger from his lair lapping in its sunny tide; and listen to the music of the boatman’s oars as they dash back its eager waves. Free as the river is the grace “which maketh glad the city of God.” A voice is heard far and wide, bidding all men to its banks. To the Hottentot roaming through the jungles of South Africa; to the Esquimau skimming to his home on cold, snowy seas; to the tawny tribes wandering through western wilds; to the cannibal hordes feasting on their fallen foes; ay, to one and all, whether Jew or Greek, barbarian or Scythian, “the Spirit and the Bride say, Come; and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.”

Ah, ye unconverted, your hearts might well leap for joy! Dark and depraved as you may be with passions in which rage the fires of hell, there is mercy for you; Christ has “come that you might have life, and that you might have it more abundantly.” A herald of salvation, I am commissioned to invite you to partake of that living water; “whoso drinketh thereof shall never thirst.” Will you accept the invitation? I pray you send me not away with the excuse that you are too unworthy so distinguished a privilege. Who is worthy? If Zaccheus, the false accuser; if Peter, who denied his Master thrice; if Saul, the chief of sinners; if a million more as vile as they could

drink of this river, "how long halt ye between two opinions?"

But I fear that with many it is not a dread of being denied this living water, but an insensibility to its value, which keeps you from it. You do not doubt its freeness. Ever and anon the river sweeps by you in its course; its waters lave your very feet, and its rippling music falls upon your ears. The fault with you is that instead of quaffing of its copious stream, glad of an opportunity of showing your appreciation of Heaven's gift, you suffer yourselves to be attracted by the flowers which smile around you, and wander off in forbidden paths to rest beneath the shade of luxury and ease.

O cease this folly! Away to the river of the water of life! This is the river to drink abundantly of, which constitutes the heaven of the white-robed ones above. This is the river, one drop of which the parched tongue of Dives craves this night in hell. Of its clear, crystal waters you too must drink or perish likewise. Speed then, O speed, to its brimming banks! Pant for it as the hart after the water-brooks. Mock me not by telling me you do not need it. You may not seem to need it in the heyday of youth, with strength in your arm, hope in your heart, and sunny skies above you; but believe me, you will need it when you come to die. Then, like the traveler far out in the desert, his water spent and no oasis within reach, millions of money will be reckoned naught to obtain the desired draught.

Thus did a choking wanderer in the desert cry:
"O that Allah one prayer would grant me before I die,
That I might stand up to my knees in a cool lake,
My burning tongue and parching throat in it to slake."

No lake he saw, and when they found him in the waste,
A bag of gems and gold lay just before his face,
And his dead hands a paper with this writing grasped:
"Worthless was wealth when dying for water I gasped!"

Take care, lest sinking down at last amid the desert of sin you long in vain for “the river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God,” and expire wailing forth the vanity of those earthly joys for whose sake you now imperil your immortal soul!

IV. Grace, like a river, is subject to occasional overflows.

The river does not always keep within its bounds. Swollen by melting snows or by the torrents which pour down from watery skies, it now and then leaves its banks and spreads itself over the adjacent fields. In some regions these inundations, occurring periodically, are of the highest value. The rich deposit which is left by the water on subsiding fertilizes the soil, and causes plants to bloom, and trees to flourish, and harvests to be reaped, where otherwise would be nothing but a dreary desolation. What would Egypt be without the annual overflow of the Nile? But for the river it would be undistinguishable from the surrounding desert. Were the waters to cease to rise and irrigate the soil, vegetation would wither and the whole land be speedily uninhabitable.

The overflow of a river has its counterpart in the manifestations of divine grace. There are seasons when it is communicated in more than ordinary measure:

The stream that has been flowing quietly along, chanting its melody to the few trusting hearts that have taken root upon its fertile banks, suddenly begins to rise, and bursting through every restraint, sweeps over an entire community. O the rich blessings consequent on such an overflow! When the waves subside, and we look out on what had perhaps long been a moral wilderness, we see the blades of truth springing up on every side, and the flowers of holiness unfolding their hidden sweets, and the fruits of righteousness appearing on the vines and trees which had hitherto been barren of all good. Thanks be unto God for every

such overflow of his grace! Would that we might now see such an overflow here! Would that while I speak the waters might swell, and rise, and flow over this assembly! Would that the current might deepen and broaden until it should lave with its joyous tide the heart of every sinner in our midst! “Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness; let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together.”

V. Grace, like a river, finally returns to its native source.

The source of the river is the ocean. The waters of the mighty deep, ascending in the form of vapor and borne inland by the winds, are arrested by the mountain chains, whose lofty summits act as loadstones, condensing and drawing from them copious supplies of rain and snow. Percolating through the porous soil, and flowing along rocky fissures or veins of sand, the waters are conveyed to the fountains, whence they issue in sparkling rills, which coalescing constitute the streams, which after many a curve unite to make the rivers, which roll resistless to the sea. Of this operation of nature no more correct and beautiful description can be found than Solomon's: “All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again.” Thus it is with divine grace. It comes from, and it returns to, the bosom of God. Wise, then, are they who commit themselves to the guidance of the sacred stream. No disappointment can await them if they follow it trustfully to the end. Now indeed friends, like deceitful brooks, may forsake them; but then what a brotherhood will greet them! Now many pleasures, like summer sunshine, may be lost; but then what raptures will stream upon them! Now gold and silver may be left behind; but then what countless treasures, scattered through immensity, will compensate

their loss! Now the vale of poverty and humiliation may be their frequent portion; but then the past, transformed in the light of the glory to which it has conducted them, they will join exulting myriads in giving strength and sweetness to the song which will rise forever as the voice of many waters!

SERMON IX.

THE CALL OF MATTHEW

“And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom ; and he said unto him, Follow me. And he left all, rose up, and followed him.” (Luke v. 27, 28.)

WE have here an account of the call of Matthew. It is interesting as the earliest notice of one who subsequently became an eminent apostle ; and it is instructive, too, as throwing light on the character of Christ, and the nature of that obedience which he exacts of his disciples.

We take two points :

I. The Call of Matthew.

“And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom ; and he said unto him, Follow me.”

1. We here notice the condescension of Christ.

Matthew was “a *publican*.” As such he was a despised person. The publicans, you know, were the collectors of the Roman taxes. The taxes were often onerous and oppressive. To the Jews they were exceedingly obnoxious. They reminded them continually of their servile condition —that they were no longer an independent nation, but the subjects of a foreign power. The antipathy with which they regarded the payment of these taxes extended to all who were engaged in their collection. For a Jew to accept the office of tax-gatherer was considered infamous. It secured for him the undisguised hatred and contempt of his countrymen. No loyal Jew would eat or associate with him. No true daughter of Israel would stoop to an alliance with him. He was scorned and loathed as a traitor to his country and an enemy to his God.

Such a person was Matthew. That he should be willing thus to brave the anger of his countrymen is easily explained. You will find men in all lands who are willing to forfeit public esteem, and endure reproach and obloquy, if by so doing they can amass wealth or gain a livelihood at little trouble. Matthew, no doubt, was one of this class. It was his love of money, his desire for worldly prosperity, which induced him to accept this odious office. You see, then, in him, a hardened, covetous, degraded, and disreputable man. Sustaining such a character, what condescension was it in Christ to go to him—this outcast, this depraved man—and call him to his service. But this act was only in harmony with the whole of Christ's earthly life. From the time that he left his Father's throne to assume our nature, until in that same nature raised and glorified he ascended into heaven, each step in his career was characterized by the most wonderful condescension. He was born not of a mighty princess, but of an obscure virgin; the place of his nativity was not a proud metropolis, but a humble village; his place of training was not the schools of the rabbis, nor the groves of the philosophers, but a carpenter's bench; his chosen apostles were not men of rank and influence, but bronzed fishermen and unlettered peasants; he surrounded himself not with bannered armies, but with multitudes of the poor, the sick, and the distressed; with an arm that could crush the universe, he permitted himself to be nailed to a tree; though Lord of life, he became obedient to death.

As followers of Christ, we should imitate his condescension to this publican. Says St. Paul: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant." Again he says: "Mind not high

things, but condescend to men of low estate." We are prone to despise and neglect those who are our inferiors in character or position. But such a disposition, such conduct, we should carefully avoid. The wicked are to be pitied, however much we may hate their wickedness. The poor are to be sought out and helped, however much we may dislike their poverty. Bad as a man may be—though a moral leper, under the ban of society, and hideous and repulsive as may be his circumstances, we are to seek to do him good, and especially to save him. It is to our shame if we confine our zeal to the respectable and well-to-do members of a community. It is comparatively easy to go to the home upon which no slur has been cast, where the parlor is well furnished, and the fragrance of flowers and the song of birds come floating through the casement. It requires courage and love to go where there is dishonor, or where, perhaps, the children are ragged, and you can find hardly a chair to sit down on, and there is nothing pleasant to relieve the eye. But, like our Divine Master, we are to stoop that we may lift up the fallen and degraded, and clothe them with righteousness like a garment. We are to go down into the depths of the ocean for pearls, as well as to climb to the slopes of the mountains for silver and gold. The bee seeks honey from the flowers whose bells hang downward and are hidden by the clustering leaves, as well as from those whose petals look upward and whose aspiring stems lift them into the blaze of the golden sun. The farmer does not abandon his land because it may be stony or sandy, if there is any possibility of reclaiming it. The difficulty of any work enhances its merit when achieved. I have stood by the great masterpieces of sculpture, and admired the genius that could so deftly cut and polish the rough granite or marble into such shapes of beauty. And my brother, my sister, if you are but suc-

cessful, under God, in chiseling one poor, rugged, fallen specimen of humanity into a resemblance to the Infinite, you will have wrought a work over which angels will rejoice, and which will evoke from Christ the words, “Well done!”

2. The call of Matthew brings to view, in the next place, *the authority of Christ.*

“And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom; and he said unto him, Follow me.”

“*Sitting at the receipt of custom.*” “*Follow me.*”

Had we been present, and known nothing of our Lord beyond the fact that he was a great Teacher, we might have thought his summons inopportune and arbitrary. The tax-gatherer was, in all likelihood, thronged. A noisy, jostling crowd was before him, impatient to transact their business. There were merchants from the caravans just arrived from Damascus; and there were ship-owners who had come in from their traffic on the lake; there were artisans from their shops, and farmers and herdsmen from the neighboring valleys and hills. Would it not have been better if the Master had waited until the publican was at leisure? Do not most men dislike to be interrupted when busy? Does it not often irritate them, and cause them to say words and be guilty of acts which, in quieter moments, they sincerely regret? By selecting this particular occasion, this unfavorable moment, does not our Lord run the risk of a hasty and petulant rebuff? And now that, regardless of this, he addresses him, would it not be prudent in him to adopt a more conciliatory tone? Is he not too absolute and peremptory in his demand? Will not the publican look upon him as despotic, and resent it as an unwarrantable interference with his liberty? But, whatever may be the issue, we observe no hesitancy on the part of

Christ. Marching right up through the throng, and fixing his calm eye on Matthew, he says to him, "Follow me." It was easy for Jesus to vindicate his course. He was not simply a man; he was even greater than the greatest of prophets—he was the Son of the living God. As such, he was clothed with supreme and universal authority.. He had a prior and inalienable right to Matthew's obedience. It was he who had given him "life, and breath, and all things." He was his Creator and Preserver. Unless he chose, he was under no obligation to waive or invite his discipleship. It was his prerogative to command. Moreover, he knew that by following him Matthew would secure his best interests for time and for eternity. Mere earthly gain, however great, would be paltry compared with the riches of grace and glory to be enjoyed in his service. Then, Jesus had no time to await the publican's convenience. His ministry was brief, and his work of paramount importance. Cæsar's business must stand aside when it came between him and the salvation of souls. He can speak but a word to Matthew, and must then press on to preach the gospel to others. High above the babble of voices, and the ring of the Roman coin, the mandate is heard, "Follow me."

The call of Matthew, "at the receipt of custom," is not without its application to ourselves. It teaches us that business must be subordinated to religion; that the sphere of human toil must be under the control of Christ. You will find many who have no regard for Christ in their secular pursuits. They would shut him out from their employments as completely as though he had no existence. They allow themselves to be governed by principles and maxims which, however plausible they may seem, are found on examination to be utterly opposed to the will of Christ. They will plead, perhaps, in extenuation of their course,

that to follow any other would involve them in financial disaster and ruin. I know this, however, that whatever temporal losses or embarrassments they may escape by their disobedience, it is at the peril of their eternal welfare that they fail to follow Christ. Christ will be supreme in our business, or he will withhold from us his favor. He will be more to us than wealth or fame, or the wishes or needs of friends, or even life itself. "Follow me" is a command which extends to every department of life. Religion, like a sun, is to give center and bounds to the whole world of our being. Its authority is to be felt in the store, in the office, in the workshop, and in the field. It is to sit down at the sewing-machine; it is to ply hammer and plane; it is to supervise weights and measures; it is to seal every bargain; it is to be with the driver in his wagon, with the watchman at his post, with the book-keeper at his desk, with the preacher in the pulpit, with the orator at the bar, with the judge on the bench, and with the politician in the halls of legislative assemblies; it is to keep the employé from frittering away in idleness his master's time; it is to restrain from guile and untruthfulness in trading; it is to close the ledger on Saturday night, and not open it again until Monday morning; it is to find a plea for prayer before going forth to labor; it is to watch with care, lest by unnecessary overtaxing, mind and body are unfitted for the services of the sanctuary; it is to make the pursuit of gain in every possible way tributary to the development of a nobler character, and to the advancement of the cause of God. I grant that in some instances to govern our business by the precepts and spirit of Christ will entail the loss of money, but such a loss should be insufficient to seduce or deter us from loyalty to his will. I believe, however, that as a rule the men who conduct their business on Christian principles eventually succeed. Many of our rich-

est men have been men of spotless integrity. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is." But if wealth is withheld, if even poverty is to be endured in the path of rectitude, we should be content. A good conscience is far better than millions of gold. The smile of Christ is sweeter than the sight of broad acres and palatial residences. "A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked." There may be privation, but there is certain peace in obeying the command, "Follow me."

From the call of Matthew we proceed to consider,

II. His Obedience.

"And he left all, rose up, and followed him."

1. His obedience was *prompt*. "He rose up." I do not suppose that Christ was altogether a stranger to Matthew. Our Lord had already attracted vast multitudes to his ministry. It is quite likely that Matthew had heard some of his discourses, and witnessed some of his miracles. He had no doubt come to the conclusion that the New Teacher was the promised Messiah. Whether he had as yet recognized the divine character of Christ, we do not know. He must have regarded him at least as possessing divine inspiration, and as upheld by divine power. The earnest summons to repentance, which formed a part of Christ's preaching, must have sunk deep into the heart of Matthew. We imagine him already penitent. We imagine him dissatisfied with his past life, and aspiring to something better and more honorable. Perhaps he had begun to amend his ways. Though still retaining his office as publican, he may have renounced his covetousness. He may now have exacted no more than was just. But he was far from satisfied. His secret wish may have been to be one of Christ's disciples. What if he were to resign his office, and openly avow himself a follower of the Nazarene? But would he be welcomed

by the Master? Would he not be considered too low and disreputable for association with One so pure and stainless? He is undecided. But when Christ, who read his heart, approached him, and with his kind, firm voice, summoned him to his service, his indecision vanishes; "he left all, rose up, and followed him."

Sinner, the Master still speaks. He calls you to-day. He is not a stranger to you; you have heard of him all your life, and you know him to be "the Christ, the Son of the living God." You are familiar with his gracious words; you have seen his mighty works—works of spiritual healing, no less wonderful and God-like than the giving sight to the blind and speech to the dumb. He calls you to his service. Will you not at last be prompt? Like Matthew, will you not at once rise up and confess him as your Lord? How wise was Matthew in obeying promptly! Had he refused, Jesus might have passed on, and he might never have received another such a call; and, for aught you know, the present opportunity may be your last. Even had Matthew been subsequently converted, he would in all probability have missed the privilege of becoming an apostle. Jesus would have selected some one else to fill up the sacred college. Matthew might have been saved; but he would not have been one of that glorious galaxy which now shine so resplendently in the moral firmament, and which will arrest the gaze of men to the end of time. By refusing to obey now, you may fail of an honorable position in the kingdom of God. O young man, if you decide for Christ to-day, he may elevate you to a post of responsibility and glorious usefulness in his Church.

Two young men were accosted on the street of a large city, one Sunday afternoon, by a pious gentleman. He invited them to go to the Methodist Sunday-school. One agreed to attend the following Sunday. The other declined

to make any promise. The one who went promptly was soon afterward converted, and became a minister. The other, though he at length came to the Sunday-school, came too late to be brought under the special religious influences which had just been enjoyed, and was not converted for years. Some years ago I called on the gentleman who had extended the invitation. As we stood on the green terrace in front of the school of which he was the principal, I alluded to his kindness that Sunday afternoon. He remembered the circumstance very distinctly, and remarked: "I have often thought that had your friend decided promptly, he too would have been a minister."

Brethren, it is to our interest to obey Christ promptly; and not only so at the beginning, but through every stage of the Christian life. The various duties which devolve upon us are so many gracious opportunities for spiritual development, and for qualifying ourselves for rewards, if not in this life, in the life which is to come. To slight these opportunities, to let them slip by without improving them, will be to our permanent injury, even though we may be finally saved. I remember an apple-tree that stood near the parsonage at Marion. One summer it bore fruit, and when the fruit was about ripe it put forth fresh blossoms. Of course the blossoms did not bring fruit to perfection. Had they appeared promptly, at the proper time, the fruit would have matured, and the value of the tree would have been enhanced. So, if you are not prompt to obey Christ in all things, wherein we fail we lose opportunities of adding to our spiritual fruitfulness. We may afterward mourn our disobedience and pray earnestly for forgiveness, and resolve to do better; but our repentance cannot undo the past; our sighs and tears are like blossoms out of season—sweet and fragrant, but not so delightful to God nor as honorable to ourselves as would have been the timely fruit of cheerful obedience.

2. The obedience of Matthew was not only prompt but self-sacrificing. "He left all."

His business was a lucrative one. And he was no doubt in comfortable, if not affluent, circumstances. We read of a great feast which he made in his own house immediately after resigning his office, at which a great many were present. But however much he may have valued them, occupation, home, friends, were all renounced for the sake of Christ. So far as outward appearances went, he renounced a great deal. To the eye of the world, there was not much to be obtained from the New Prophet. It is true, he might be the Messiah, but it was evident he had little intention of establishing a secular kingdom. He did not speak and act like a coming conqueror. Matthew might derive pious instruction from him, but nothing more. There were no worldly riches and honors to be gained from the Nazarene. But, unlike the men of the world, Matthew possessed faith; and to the eye of faith, in its far-off glance, in leaving all for Christ, he was but leaving the muddy pool for the living stream, the gilded cage for the open heavens. He saw that he would gain at least present peace. He felt sure of a reward in the future that would infinitely surpass in value all he had sacrificed for Christ. Faith made it easy to follow Christ. The objects of sense seemed dwarfed and insignificant in the presence of those blessed and eternal realities which faith discerns. Matthew was as some traveler who has "looked upon a mountain scene where all the highest summits were wrapped in mist, and the lower hills looked mighty and majestic; until some puff of wind came and rolled up the curtain that had shrouded and hidden the icy pinnacles and peaks that were higher up; and as that solemn white apocalypse rose and towered in the heavens, he forgot all about the green hills below, because his eye beheld the mighty summits

that live amongst the stars, and sparkle white through eternity."

My unconverted friend, you too must deny self if you would be a disciple of Christ. It may not be necessary for you to forsake your employment, unless it be of a questionable character; but you must renounce every habit and interest which is opposed to Christ, though as dear to you as a right eye, or as indispensable as a right-hand. It may be fondness for cards, for the dance, or the wine-cup; it may be methods of conducting business, which, however successful, violate justice, and are at war with truth; whatever in your life is not in harmony with Christ and his will you must surrender for his sake. And have you not more than enough to encourage you to make this sacrifice? How much more clearly than Matthew do you discern the character and work of Christ, and know the value of the rewards he offers to his faithful followers. Matthew was like the enslaved Israelite, who had heard of Canaan amid the brick-kilns of Egypt; you are like the emancipated Israelite who saw it from the mountain of Moab and the brink of Jordan.

3. The obedience of Matthew was *steadfast*. "He followed him."

Save in Gethsemane, where with the other disciples he fled in fear, we never read of his deserting Christ. He kept right on following him, through persecution, through obloquy, through imprisonment, and finally through death. As fellow-disciples we should emulate him in this respect. "We should be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." Of course, if we fall, we should rise and run again. But this is not the best and noblest part. We should endeavor to be like the sun which never pauses, but shines more and more unto the perfect day. We should endeavor to be like the river which turns

not back, but becomes deeper, grander, as it nears the sea.

O Master, there are some here who have begun to follow thee! May we be faithful! may we never halt in the narrow path, or cease to tread in thy blessed footsteps! may we follow thee withersoever thou leadest us! follow thee over the steep hills, where the sharp rocks wound our feet, as well as across the broad valleys all radiant with summer flowers; follow thee through the deep waters where the surges roll, as well as along the margin of the streams that make music in their gentle flow; follow thee over the scorching desert where the sun beats hot, and there is no near fount to refresh our lips and no green strip to relieve our eye; follow thee through the last dark river, till, reaching the farther side, thou shalt turn round, and with heaven in thy beaming face, take our hand and lead us up through the gates into the eternal city!

SERMON X.

THE PARABLE OF THE UNJUST STEWARD.

“And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward. Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed. I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. So he called every one of his lord’s debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? And he said, A hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, A hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write four-score. And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations. He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man’s, who shall give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him. And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God. The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into

it. And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail. Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery." (Luke xvi. 1-18.)

TO "search the Scriptures" is the inalienable right and bounden duty of all who possess them. In this exercise, however, the greatest vigilance is necessary if we would "come to a knowledge of the truth." Particularly should we guard against interference from early and precipitate conclusions. It is common in youth to form opinions respecting all the prominent passages of Scripture; but as in numerous instances these opinions are formed not by deliberate study and reflection, but solely by giving credence to the assertions of others, it not unfrequently happens that they are more or less erroneous. When, therefore, we have resolved to examine personally any particular passage of Scripture, it is highly proper that we lay aside for the time all previous opinions respecting it, and endeavor to ascertain, with singleness of purpose, the teaching of inspiration, whatever that teaching may be. By adopting this precaution, there will be a greater probability of our arriving at the truth; which done, should we find our former opinions coincident with the result of our present investigation, we shall have the satisfaction of knowing that we "have not followed a cunningly devised fable."

In no instance is this precaution more necessary than in the examination of the parable before us. Here, for centuries, commentators have been laboring for a satisfactory solution as for a lost pearl; but so many have professed to find it, and most of these have differed so widely in their relation of it, that it may well be questioned whether, in fact, it has ever been discovered. Indeed, many inquirers think it has not; and some of these, disconcerted by the futile efforts of the past, and dreading a like issue to any renewed search which they might institute, have gone so far

as to pronounce the parable wholly unintelligible. This, however, is going much too far. We believe that the parable admits of a solution, and that this solution is discoverable. We have the most implicit confidence in the accuracy of St. Luke in recording this parable, and in the perspicuity of the Saviour when delivering it. Moreover, we regard it as an integral part of that "Scripture which is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." Different solutions should teach us caution, but not despair. The truth must be somewhere. Believing this, we shall seek it. Reason, not prejudice, shall guide us. Favorite opinions shall be held in abeyance. Our eye shall be single. The effort may prove but one more added to the many unsatisfactory efforts of the past. If so, it will soon be forgotten; if not, it will not be despised by the lovers of Biblical truth, and will help in a measure to settle more firmly the foundations of our faith.

Our first endeavor will be to ascertain the precise lesson which the parable was intended to convey. This, we think, will give the key to a satisfactory solution of the whole; for as the parable was given to illustrate and enforce the lesson, all its parts must correspond with that lesson, whatever it may be.

Many high authorities hold the lesson of the parable to be Christian prudence; and with this as their key they have arrived at the following solution: The steward, they say, showed a wise caution in the management of his temporal affairs, which, dishonest as he was, commended itself to his lord; and such a caution, though not such a mode of manifesting it, Christ would have his people exhibit while engaged in his service. Like the steward who, while defrauding his lord, was prudent enough to secure for himself friends and a home when dismissed from his office, so we,

by a prudent use of the wealth we may possess, are to make to ourselves friends, that “when we fail”—a euphemistic expression meaning “when we die”—there may be a multitude to welcome us to everlasting habitations.

But much as we esteem and venerate the authorities in question, we cannot concur with them in the view that prudence is the lesson inculcated. To such a view there are several objections.

First, scrutinize we ever so closely the application which follows the parable, and in which the lesson is undoubtedly contained, we can discover no allusion whatever to prudence. Faithfulness and justice are the only virtues mentioned. “Faithful in the least, faithful also in much;” “unjust in the least, unjust also in much;” are among our Lord’s observations in applying the parable; but not a word is uttered in reference to prudence. The authorities in question perceiving the difficulty, have labored to remove it by showing that Christian prudence is faithfulness to God. This, in a certain qualified sense, we admit. One of the divine commands is that we “walk circumspectly;” and in our covenant relation we cannot disregard this command without incurring the charge of unfaithfulness. But here it should be observed that it is not prudence itself, but the exercise of prudence *in obedience to a command of God*, that constitutes faithfulness. In this sense charity, as well as prudence, is faithfulness. Between prudence and faithfulness, however, there is a manifest distinction. Prudence is a wise forecast for the future, faithfulness is the being true to our engagements with others. Any attempt, therefore, to make the application enjoin a lesson on prudence, by confounding prudence with faithfulness, is inadmissible.

The second objection is that prudence cannot be well employed as the key to the solution of the parable. Now, with the true key all the parts of the parable will corre-

spond, as the parts of a lock, and their application to moral conduct will be without difficulty. But how they correspond with prudence, and how, without forcing, they may be made effective by it, we cannot perceive.

That the steward's conduct in lowering the bills, and thus endeavoring to secure himself friends, is to be regarded as furnishing an example of *prudence*, which prudence is to be imitated by all true Christians in respect to the disposition of their worldly substance, we cannot believe. For what is the test of prudence? Is it not success? But where was the success of the steward when, notwithstanding his scheme, his lord discovered the fraud? But even granting that he had been able to deceive his lord, we are far from believing that the steward's act was prudent. Those who united with him in his villainy were unquestionably unjust men; and from what we know of such characters there was not a great probability of their befriending him when dismissed from his office. Aware of his real character, they would rather keep him at a distance when powerless to assist them in further fraud. They would know that he could not inform on them for the share they had taken in his theft, as he would thereby implicate himself, and his lord had power to imprison, torment, and even sell him. True, it is stated in the parable that "the lord commended the unjust steward because he had done *wisely*," and from this statement the authorities in question argue that the steward *must*, as a matter of course, have exhibited prudence. But it seems to us that the commendation is to be understood as ironical. We cannot conceive that his lord, after finding his steward so grossly unfaithful, would feel like commanding the course which had a tendency to beggar him. We think his lord appears like one rejoiced that he has his enemy in his power, and that there is no escape from his toils. It would be entirely unnatural for him to appear otherwise. And the beau-

ty and force of a parable depend on the characters acting in conformity with nature. Is it likely that you or I would commend a man for skillfully cheating us, especially when it was not the first offense? I trow not.

We think it is just here that the authorities in question have erred in their endeavor to ascertain the true lesson of the parable. Forgetting the fact that in the narrative we altogether miss the manner of our Lord's address, they have taken every word in its most literal signification, and finding it stated that "the lord commended the unjust steward because he had done wisely," they have without reflection sprung at once to the conclusion that prudence is the lesson taught. In support of the view that the commendation of the steward's wisdom is to be regarded as ironical, there are other considerations besides those already mentioned. Such an ironical use of language is not only natural but common, and is to be found in all literature, sacred and profane. Moreover, irony is often employed with striking effect. As an instance, take our Lord's inquiries respecting John the Baptist, as recorded by St. Luke: "What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they which are gorgeously appareled and live delicately are in kings' courts. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet."

In the parable before us the use of irony is peculiarly appropriate and natural. What could more deeply impress us with the extreme folly of the steward's scheme than his being suddenly confronted by his injured lord, who in tones of irony "commends him because he has done *wisely*."

The words which follow bring to view the persons for whom the parable was specially intended, and were doubtless delivered in the same ironical strain. "For the chil-

dren of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." Immediately around our Lord were his disciples and a throng of publicans and sinners. On the edge of this circle were the Pharisees, who were usually present on such occasions—not for the purpose of receiving instruction, but with the hope that the Great Teacher would say something on which they could base a charge of heresy or sedition. These Pharisees, though ostensibly pious, were essentially worldly. They lived only for the present; they gave to it their affections, and they sought their happiness in what it could bestow, especially in the way of honor and applause. They were "the children of this world," in contradistinction to the disciples, who were "the children of light." To these worldlings the conduct of the disciples in renouncing all for Christ appeared the profoundest folly. They could see nothing to be gained by thus publicly acknowledging their guilt and imperfection, and trusting for salvation to the doctrine and words of another. They were already in high repute among the people for superior sanctity. This repute they would maintain at all hazards, "for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." It was, no doubt, what they thought a prudential regard for their reputation which led them to reject the baptism of John. It is stated that "all the people who heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him." To place themselves on a level with the multitude, as sinners needing pardon and renewal, would, they feared, jeopardize their position in society, and perhaps forfeit that esteem, that adulation, to which they had been accustomed and of which they were so fond. No, they would rather violate conscience, they would rather, if necessary, lower the standard of morality, than forego "the

greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi." Though thus supremely worldly, they nevertheless entertained expectations of sharing in the glory and felicity of the future, overlooking the fact that they were making no suitable provision for the future, and that the allotments of eternity would be fixed, not by erring estimates of man, but by the strict and impartial judgment of a righteous God. Our Lord suddenly and ironically announces to them the folly of their course, assuring them that, however much they might be esteemed by men, there was as little likelihood that the Omniscient would approve them as there was that a master would commend his steward when he had detected him in fraud.

The injunction, "And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations," is also to be understood as ironical. Its apparent direction to use ill-gotten gain to secure everlasting happiness is so contrary to scriptural analogy, and to the revealed character of God, that every interpreter seeks, by some peculiar rendering of the words, to give it a different signification. When once considered as ironical, however, all difficulty vanishes, the direction, as we shall see, is inserted with point, and we are saved the unsatisfactoriness of endeavoring to harmonize the passage with the rest of the Scriptures by departing from the plain sense of the words.

The word "mammon" is from the Syriac, and denotes riches, gain, profit. As used in the New Testament it refers not simply to money, but to all that appeals to the depraved heart—what is desired and coveted by "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." In one sense the object desired may be wealth, in another power, in another fame, in another sensual pleasure. The desire, indeed; may embrace all of these objects, and though

one may be chief, the others may be craved as accessory to its attainment. Thus, wealth may be desired, not only for its own sake, but for the sake of the honor and ease it secures.

“The mammon of unrighteousness,” by means of which the Pharisees were “making friends,” was not money, but usurped authority. Like the steward in the parable, the Pharisees occupied a responsible position—they “sat in Moses’s seat;” in other words, were the recognized custodians and interpreters of the law. Instead of upholding the authority of that law, they perfidiously lowered its demands for selfish ends. This they did by their “traditions”—oral communications of purely human authority, but to which they attached an importance even superior to that of the written word. We might cite numerous instances of their unfaithfulness as religious teachers. For example, the law inculcated the widest and tenderest benevolence; this they interpreted as referring solely to Jews, all other persons being regarded by them as aliens whom they were at liberty to despise at pleasure. The law required the strictest adherence to truth—their exposition was that an oath in which the name of God was not distinctly mentioned was not binding; indeed, that a man might swear with his lips, and at the same time annul it in his heart. The law enjoined the exhibition of filial love and obedience—in their opinion all that a son who desired to evade the obligation of assisting his parents had to do was to say “Corban” over his property—to declare it consecrated, bound over to the Lord—and he was free. As might be supposed, the advocacy of such a system of casuistry was not without its reward: it rendered its upholders popular with the masses, who were only too glad to find a sanction in high places for the indulgence of their wickedness. It was the means of augmenting their worldly substance, affording them, in various ways and under the

cloak of an assumed piety, abundant opportunities for extortion. Moreover, it enabled them to give unlimited license to their own passions, a punctilious observance of rites and ceremonies being all that was necessary to commend them to the dulled conscience of a besotted nation.

That our Lord, by the parable of the unjust steward, aimed a blow at these corrupt teachers, is evident from the closing remarks of his application. “The Pharisees also, who were covetous [greedy of gain, especially honor], heard all these things; and they derided him. And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God. The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it. And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail. Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery; and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.” Here he declares the perpetual obligation of the moral law, and specifies one of the many instances in which they had made it null by their unauthorized assumptions. From the circumstances of the divine institution of marriage, from the express command connected therewith, it was evident that there was but one sufficient cause for divorce. The marriage bond was to continue indissoluble until death, save in this extreme case. Such, however, was the condition of the Israelites on coming out of Egypt, that Moses, in his capacity as civil legislator, suffered husbands to put away their wives for other causes than adultery. This was on account of “the hardness of their hearts,” he attempting to regulate, with an imperfect remedy, an evil which the obstinacy of national feeling would not allow to be at once repressed by a positive stat-

ute. A civil regulation, given to meet the exigences of the times, the Pharisees invested with all the force of a moral precept. They allowed a man to divorce his wife for the most trivial reasons. National licentiousness, in this respect, was the inevitable consequence. And this, they contended, was in accordance with the will of Heaven, while it was practically subversive of one of the divine commands. "I say unto you," said Christ with terrible irony, as he scanned the motives which prompted them to this course of action. "I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that when ye fail, *they* may receive you into *everlasting* habitations." The friends of the unfaithful steward—what home, what permanent refuge, could they give him when his lord discovered his treachery and appeared to punish him? Go on in your chosen course; pervert the Scriptures; make void the moral law by your vain traditions; win, by the mammon of unrighteousness, the power, the trust you have abused, gifts and a good name from a sensual and degraded people; but remember eternity, remember Him in whose hands are the destinies of eternity, and ask yourselves what will be your position then. No merely human distinctions will rise up to plead for you in the divine councils. No wealth, or position, or fame, to which you may fraudulently attain in this life, will secure to you an entrance into the eternal city. The rule of judgment will be: "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much." "If therefore you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon"—the office which has been confided to you, and which you have wrongfully and unscrupulously used for the advancement of your secular interests—"who will commit to your trust the true riches?"—the honors and glories of the skies. "And if ye have not been faithful in that which

is another man's"—a trust delegated to you, and in its nature temporary—"who shall give you that which is your own?"—the heavenly inheritance which, once bestowed, will be a permanent possession.

Such a rendering of these passages opens up, we think, the true lesson of the parable. It is not prudence, but fidelity—*fidelity in respect to the trust with which God has honored us.* And is not this the lesson we should naturally expect from the story of a master and his steward? Says St. Paul: "Moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found *faithful.*" This lesson, as we shall see, gives unity and consistency to the parable; adds force to the remark, "Faithful in the least, faithful also in much;" and wings the arrow of the moral to its mark—"Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

Having found, as we believe, the true key to the parable, let us now see how its various parts correspond with it, and how they would be made effective by it.

First, the correspondence. There was a certain rich man who had a steward to whom he intrusted his goods. The steward, however, proved unfaithful, and in the course of time some one accused him to his lord. His lord, anxious and alarmed, summoned him to his presence, acquainted him with the charge, and demanded an inspection of the books, that he might know whether to continue him in office. The steward departed, and apprehensive that his guilt would be detected, and dreading the consequences that would follow, began seriously to ponder how he could remedy his folly. "What shall I do?" he said, "for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig." He had long lived a life of ease, and if dismissed from his present employment would be unable to earn a livelihood by hard manual labor. "To beg I am ashamed." His office had been one of dignity and authority, and pride shrunk

from assuming the position of a mendicant. To have frankly confessed his fraud, and to have thrown himself on the mercy of his injured lord, would have been his wisest course. Had he done so, the result might have been similar to that elsewhere described by our Lord: "And when the king began to reckon, one was brought unto him which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshiped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt." The steward, however, had no lofty conception of duty, and was too selfish to consider what repentance and amendment might do with his master. At last he resolves on a plan by which he will extirpate himself from his difficulty. He will conspire with his lord's debtors to lower their bills, which will enable him, perhaps, to present a satisfactory balance-sheet, and if not, will secure to him friends when ejected from office. The plan is no sooner formed than it is carried into effect. Calling the debtors together he inquires of the first, "How much owest thou my lord? and he said, A hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, A hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write four-score." And thus he proceeds to lower the bill of "every one of his lord's debtors." Really a shrewd plan! So the steward thought. But he has "reckoned without his host." In some way his lord is apprised of his further unfaithfulness. Quite likely one of the debtors, more honest than the rest, felt constrained to inform him of the nefarious transaction. To the steward's surprise, his

lord suddenly confronts him. He is now not simply indignant, but there is a gleam in his eye before which the steward turns pale. With ironical emphasis he commends him for his wisdom. He feels that he has the villain in his clutches, and can afford to play with him a moment, as a lion with his prey. It is easy to paraphrase his commendation: "O man, it was wise in thee to avoid labor, for full well thou knowest that if thine account be unsatisfactory there was no one who can sell thee to make up the deficiency. It was wise in thee to avoid beggary, for full well thou knowest that if thy delinquency be proved there is no one who can imprison thee till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing. It was wise in thee to join hand in hand with knaves, and doubtless they will brave my anger and shelter thee, now that I reckon with thee. Fool! thy doom is sealed."

Now, we think the correspondence is exact. There is no need that we strain any of the parts of the parable to make them fit the lesson; all are in unison with it.

We shall now see how the parable, as illustrative of the folly of unfaithfulness, is turned to spiritual instruction.

The rich man represents Jehovah, to whom pertains universal authority. The steward, in his position of responsibility and trust, represents the Pharisees, who as religious teachers, were "stewards of the mysteries of God." The fraudulent career of the steward portrays the history of that sect, their uniform endeavor being the aggrandizement of self, even at the expense of righteousness and truth. The threat of dismissal may refer to the ministry of the Baptist, arousing them to a sense of their unfaithfulness, and warning them of the speedy termination of their power. The lowering of the bills marks still greater perfidy on the part of the Pharisees, their determination being taken to make friends of the people by sanctioning their sins, so

that in the event of their overthrow as the dominant ecclesiastical body of the nation, they would still have influence sufficient to command that adulation, and those opportunities for worldly emolument they so insatiably coveted. The sudden appearance of the indignant master, and his ironical commendation of the steward, point to the judgment which these Pharisees seem to have forgotten, and to the awful punishment which awaited their unfaithfulness.

The parable thus understood is not without its lesson for our times. To the Church collectively, to every denomination of professed Christians, to each minor society of believers, it stands forth a light-house of guidance and warning. Our position in the world is one of solemn moment and vast responsibility. To us has been intrusted the moral culture of humanity, and the ingathering of that revenue of glory which is Jehovah's due. As faithful stewards, as loyal vice-regents, we are to "shun not to declare the whole counsel of God." We are to "preach the word, be instant in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine." The lofty end we are to propose is, "that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." It is by no means easy to fulfill our trust; it is sailing against wind and wave; it is toiling up steeps precipitous and perilous. Often the more scrupulously faithful we are in the discharge of our duties, the intenser hatred we shall enkindle in the hearts of the unconverted. For there are times when men "will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers having itching ears." It is then that our fidelity is tried. We are tempted to lower the demands of Christianity, to dilute the truth, to suit the taste and to win the favor of the world. Alas! there are organized bodies naming the name of Christ, there are individual Churches, which pervert the Scriptures, and relax the claims of the

moral law, to render themselves popular with men. "These are the Churches for us!" is the cry of careless, impenitent sinners. "They tell us nothing that grates on our ears, and we can hold our membership there and do as we list." O the folly of these unfaithful stewards! They "make to themselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness;" they barter truth and honor, heart and conscience, for wealth and power and the applause of the unholy; but the withering glance of the Omniscient is upon them, and the day approaches when he shall consign them to the punishment they deserve. This suggests an important question—What is the conduct of our own Church? the Church of Wesley and Asbury, of Coke and McKendree. Is she true to her first love? Is she faithful to her bridal vows? O the wondrous part that was hers when, clad in divine beauty and leaning on divine strength, she went forth to reclaim the nations! Righteousness followed in her steps, and tributes of thanksgiving ascended to the Lord. Is she faithful? Sounds she forth the truth as sincerely, as fearlessly as ever? Insists she on holiness of heart and life by counsel and discipline, as of old, though rich men forsake her and timid men tremble for her? Alas! there is reason for humiliation and repentance and prayer. We are not as faithful as we should be; there are signs of remissness among us like dark specks in a summer sky. God forbid that they should increase! for with the gathering cloud will assuredly come the lightnings, and the tempest, and the thunder of deserved wrath!

Fidelity—let this, brethren, be our watch-word. What though we should become the national Church of this broad land; what though we should be able to point to stately edifices and towering spires without number; what though wealth and fashion, rank and learning, should come trooping to our shrines; *unfaithful*—lowering the laws of Christ, gaining popularity at the expense of principle, the winged

curse of the Almighty would pursue us, and the talons of his wrath eventually rend us. Far better to be few in numbers, and poor in outward attractions, than disloyal to duty, untrue to doctrine and discipline. God's covenant is with the faithful Church. "No weapon that is formed against her shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against her in judgment, thou shalt condemn." And sooner or later she shall triumph—*triumphs I say.* The promise is hers: "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

The parable is not without its lesson to the individual believer. My brother, in assuming the name you profess and the livery you wear, you pledged inviolable fidelity to Christ. You are to be a living representation of the truth and power of his religion. His laws are to regulate your thoughts, your words, your desires, your pursuits, your entire life. Your fidelity will be sorely tried. Worldly policy will court you with its smiles; passion will prompt you to turn aside from the narrow path; imagination will dazzle you with its visions of embowered evil. O how many have been seduced from their integrity! The love of the world has usurped the love of God, and forgetful of their vows, recreant to their position, they have chosen evil, and reaped the wages of unending death. Shun the folly of these unfaithful stewards; be firm in your allegiance to the King of kings; cleave to truth, to principle, to duty; lower not, by your example, the standard of religion. Rather "let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." "Be thou faithful unto death," says Christ, "and I will give thee a crown of life." A crown of life! The highest physical, the highest intellectual, the highest moral life!

"Who, then, is that faithful and wise steward? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing."

SERMON XI.

THE WAY TO ZION.

“And a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there: and the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” (Isa. xxxv. 8-10.)

ISAIAH has been styled “the evangelical prophet.” To him, more than to any others of the ancient seers, was it given to describe the glory and blessedness of Messiah’s kingdom. Reading some of his prophecies, we could almost imagine him to have been an eye-witness of the events which he predicts, instead of living more than six centuries prior to the occurrence. We have always wondered that the Jews could peruse his writings and continue in unbelief. That the Messiah should suffer, and that the Gentiles should be summoned to participate in all the benefits of his kingdom—the two facts most repugnant to Jewish pride—are here distinctly foreshown. The Jews, in their present condition, are not only a monument of Divine wrath, but an illustration of the power of prejudice to darken the understanding and to pervert the judgment. “In them,” as said the Saviour (and his words are as applicable now as then), is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith: “By hearing ye shall hear and shall not understand, and seeing ye shall see and shall not perceive; for this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest at any

time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."

We have in our text one of the noblest and most consolatory of Isaiah's prophecies respecting the kingdom of Christ. It brings to view, under images at once simple and sublime, its leading characteristics—in other words, the distinctive features of the Christian religion.

I. Its Unexclusiveness. "A highway shall be there."

There is here an allusion to those public ways which kings were wont to construct for the convenience and safety of their realms. These roads connected the capital with the extremities of the kingdom. Their construction often necessitated immense labor and vast expense. They crossed rivers; they skirted the sea; they wound their way through rugged mountains; they traversed the barren plain. The Appian Way, which was one of the most celebrated, was three hundred and fifty miles long. It was formed of hard stones, squared and cemented together, and was so strong that it remained entire for many hundred years. The religion of Christ is compared to such a way. It connects earth with heaven. It leads from the remote and exposed part of God's empire to his great metropolis, the New Jerusalem. The road has been built at an expense which no finite mind can compute. It called for an expenditure of love and labor which will be a theme of amazement to men and angels throughout the ages of eternity. The road had to find a foundation in the deep marshes of human depravity and weakness. It had to protect itself from the effacing sands of human indifference; it had to pass along the margin of the stormy sea of human affliction; it had to span the river of death; it had to bridge over the black and bottomless abyss of hell; and it had to find a passage through the flaming mountains of Divine justice, ere it could

terminate in “the city of the Great King.” But our Sovereign has completed it. There it stands, the grandest achievement in the universe; built of stones hewn from the inexhaustible quarries of Infinite Wisdom, cemented by the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to last “as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations.” As a “highway,” it is free for all. To walk there is not the privilege of some to the exclusion of the rest. No class can claim a monopoly of the religion of Christ. Its blessings are offered to all without exception. The commission of the Saviour to his disciples was, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” Christianity is not limited by national distinctions. The Gentile as well as the Jew, the savage New Zealander as well as the cultivated European, the dwellers in the tropics and the inhabitants of the poles, each and all through Jesus may be saved. Christianity is not limited by social distinctions. There are many inequalities in the surface of our globe—there are lofty hills and secluded vales—but to the inhabitant of a distant planet it seems but a rounded star; so dwindle the differences created by rank and fortune to the eye of Christianity. Here is a prince, there is a peasant; the one has his home in a splendid palace, the other in a dismal cabin; the one is clad in gorgeous apparel, and fares sumptuously every day; the other is often in rags, and is glad of the coarsest fare; the one, dying, shakes a whole nation as a storm the sea; the other, sinking into the grave, moves the great world no more than the falling of a leaf. What a contrast in their outward condition! But the gospel treats them as alike sinners, and offers salvation to both upon precisely the same terms. It says to the prince, “Believe, and thou shalt be saved;” of the peasant it asks no more. Christianity is not limited by intellectual difference. Not only the refined scholar, but the unlettered

boor; not only the man of genius, but the child who has just begun to comprehend his wants, may enjoy “the salvation which is by Jesus Christ.” Christianity is not limited by moral difference. None are excluded from the blessings of the gospel because of their iniquities. The greatest sinner is welcome to come and be saved from his sins. Says St. Paul: “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” O how many who were once among the vilest of sinners have trodden this “new and living way!” We might instance Manasseh, with feet that were once red with the blood of saints; Zaccheus, whose hands were sullied with the wages of unrighteousness; many who joined in that fearful cry, “Crucify him! crucify him!” The sorcerer of Ephesus, the idolaters of Galatea, the voluptuaries of Corinth—all may come, “for there is no difference; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him; for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

The next feature of the Christian religion to be considered is,

II. Its Purity. “*A highway shall be there, and a way; and it shall be called the way of holiness.*”

Public roads are named, and these names are derived from various circumstances. A road is sometimes named in honor of its builder. As the work of God, Christianity may well be termed “The way of holiness;” for holiness is one of his essential attributes, and he is revealed to us as “glorious in holiness.” A road may receive its name from the materials of which it is constructed. And on this account, too, Christianity may very properly be denominated “The way of holiness,” because all that enters into its structure, from the least precept to the noblest promise, is without blemish. Saints who have traveled over the

whole of this way, and now unite in swelling the songs of the heavenly city, cry: “Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints!” Infidels who have never walked in the way, but have examined with critical eye its foundations, have never detected a real flaw. A road may be named because of the place to which it leads; and for this reason, also, Christianity is rightly called “The way of holiness,” because it conducts to heaven, which is preëminently “the holy place.” The name of a road distinguishes it from other roads leading in a different direction; and as “The way of holiness,” the religion of Christ is distinguished from all other religions that may claim the attention of man. It is the way to heaven. “Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.” Other roads may stretch out beneath a sky of stainless blue, and pass through scenes of beauty and fragrance, but they are ways of sin, and followed they terminate in an enemy’s land—they lead to the depths of hell. To walk a highway is to commit oneself to it with the view of reaching some definite point; and, to avail ourselves of the religion of Christ, which is “The way of holiness,” is to use it as the means of enabling us to reach heaven. This, in the nature of things, implies a renunciation of sin, and a surrender to holiness. Appropriating and utilizing the Christian religion, we are necessarily partakers of its benefits. We become holy. If diligent, we increase in holiness. Step by step, day by day, year by year, we advance in purity as we go forward to the city of God. It is said of “The way of holiness,” “The unclean shall not pass over it.” This is not so much a prohibition as the statement of an impossibility. To walk in the way of holiness involves an abandonment of other ways, and when this is done, the unclean become the clean.

And so, while it is said, “The unclean shall not pass over it,” it is added, “but it shall be for those.” They have only to forsake their evil ways to find themselves upon “the path of life,” and each onward step will bring them nearer the place where there is “fullness of joy” and “pleasures for evermore.”

The next feature of the Christian religion to be considered is,

III. Its Simplicity. “*The wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.*”

Some roads are difficult to keep. The traveler may be anxious to follow them, but they are so winding, and crossed by so many other paths, and here and there so faint, as often to bewilder him, and cause him, in spite of the utmost care, to go astray. It is customary, however, to provide public roads of importance with such aids as shall enable the traveler to pursue his course without any danger of missing it. At intricate points way-marks are erected to inform him of the route which will conduct him to a certain place. It is thus with the Christian religion. A man who is in earnest to do God’s will and reach the skies, will never err for want of sufficient guidance. Says David: “The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.” The Bible contains ample information on every point relative to our duty. It is ever on hand, and capable of directing us in the most difficult and dangerous paths of our pilgrimage. In the night of trouble, when the clouds hang low, and the thick rain-drops descend, and the wind howls mournfully around us, it is “a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path.” In the moment of temptation, when broader, smoother, and more flowery paths invite our tired feet, it is a finger-post pointing to the perhaps barren path, and saying: “This is the way; walk ye in it.” If we turn aside and perish, it

will not be because the Bible was inadequate to direct us, but because we refused to be governed by its teachings.

The next feature of the Christian religion to be considered is,

IV. Its Safety. “*No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon; it shall not be found there.*”

Wild beasts infest many of the highways of the East. Crouched in some thicket, they leap upon the unwary traveler and speedily devour him. He may have just caught a far-off glimpse of the palm-groves beneath whose shade it was his hope to rest; the thought of the welcome which awaited him may have put fresh fleetness into his tired feet; but suddenly, with a rear and a bound, the lion is upon him, and his blood crims the white sand. Of the paths to happiness with which this world abounds, all are strewed with dangers, and end in disappointment, save “The way of holiness.” The pilgrim who enters and pursues this path cannot fail to reach his destination. He will be “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.” Evils may surround him; their dark, menacing forms may rise here and there in close proximity to his path; but so long as he proceeds, and swerves neither to the right-hand nor to the left, they cannot inflict on him any real injury, or even delay him on his journey. Poverty may open its fierce maw and threaten to devour him, but, moving on in the path of obedience, he finds that it is powerless to harm him. Slander may lift up its voice and shake the very foundations of his feet, but, pressing forward in obedience to the commands of God, he can bid defiance to “the cruel and devouring tongue.” Death may come up like “a lion from the swelling of Jordan,” and a stranger may appear in the person of “our adversary the devil,” but, “pondering the path of his feet,” and keeping close to “the Rock of ages,”

the Christian traveler can survey them with undaunted mien, and passing them, enter with a shout of triumph the city of eternal light. How exultant was St. Paul when contemplating the security afforded by the plan of redemption! "What," he asks, "shall we say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay; in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able [of themselves] to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

The last feature of the Christian religion to be considered is,

V The Felicity. "And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

It is not to be understood from this that there are to be no trials in the way to heaven. The path, in many places, is scorched and barren, and there is many an event to bring the tear-drop to the traveler's eye. But there are such pleasant memories to soothe the mind, and such rich consolations at hand in every time of need, and such a blessed prospect at the end of the journey, as more than make amends for the sufferings to be endured, and cause the tongue to ripple forth in song in the dreariest part of the way. Christians are "the ransomed of the Lord." They were once the captives of Satan; but their prison-doors have been opened, their fetters broken, and their bowed forms brought forth into the light and liberty of the

sons of God. And is it not enough to fill their hearts with gladness and their mouths with laughter to know that they have escaped the iron bondage of the prince of darkness, and feel no more the weight of his oppressive claims? As they journey forward they find that provision has been made for their sustenance and comfort; and though now and then they are tempted to distrust the care of their Heavenly Father, yet, continuing steadfast in his ways, they soon find relief—"with joy they draw water from the wells of salvation," and are privileged to rest beneath "the plant of renown," whose far-spreading boughs are a covert from the heat, and whose richly laden "fruit is sweet to their taste." And then, with each onward step their glance grows brighter; for they think how soon the pilgrimage will be over, and how at last, having climbed some toilsome steep, there will burst upon them in the fullness of its splendor the celestial city, with its many mansions and its rejoicing multitudes. Yes, the hills may be rough, and oft wearisome to the climber's foot; the valleys may be dark, and may now and then resound with the roar of the ravenous lion; the rivers may be deep, and their black waves may rage and fling up their foam to the very edge of the way of life, but, triumphant over all, "the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads." "Crowned with loving-kindness and tender mercies"—the amaranthine leaves which deck the brow of every pilgrim to the heavenly Jerusalem—"they go from strength to strength," gladdening the night with their holy melodies, and making the day musical with their psalms of praise. They sing amid the wild gorges of sickness and bereavement; they sing amid the desolate wastes and sirocco blasts of poverty and persecution; they sing amid the deepening shadows and surging billows of death. Death cannot hush their song; it rises

and rolls in through the gates of pearl; it flows on like a swelling stream through the ages of eternity. No grief will mar its sweetness, no sin will check its volume in the world to come. "They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

Such, then, is the religion of Jesus Christ. It is unexclusive; it is pure; it is simple, and it gives security and happiness to all who embrace and resolutely cleave to it. Thank God for providing such a way! Strange it is that any can refuse to enter and walk in the way. It is the way from sin and misery; it is the way to eternal life. O sinner, with the portal open, and the highway inviting you, step into it to-day! It is an old way; it is a tried way. Patriarchs and prophets have walked in it; apostles and martyrs have trodden it; it has been pressed by the feet of millions who have long since exchanged their travel-stained garments for white robes, and their pilgrim's staff for the harps of God. It is still thronged by millions more. Will you not go with us? "We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you: come thou with us, and we will do thee good; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel."

SERMON XII.

THE FADING LEAF.

“We all do fade as a leaf.” (Isaiah lxiv. 6.)

HOW exquisitely touching, as well as strikingly expressive, are some of those metaphors employed in Scripture, with the view of impressing on the mind the fact of man’s mortality! With what strange, fascinating influence do they arrest, attract, and rivet attention! With what mysterious yet awakening power do they play upon the finer feelings of the soul’s emotional nature! And with what deep, absorbing interest do they lead us to meditate on what is indeed so sad and solemn a reality—“In Adam all die!”

One—not the least impressive—of these figures is the opening flower of spring-time. Speaking of man, says Job: “As a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.” Observe, not as the giant oak of the forest, outliving the wreck of centuries, and when its weaker comrades are laid low still standing with its gnarled roots firmly fixed in the riven rock and its spreading branches tossing gayly to the summer breeze. No; but as the fragile flower, which has scarce begun to unfold its hidden sweets, when nipped by the north wind’s bickering blast, or parched by the noonday’s sultry sun, its momentary glories waste and its short-lived beauties die. Another figure, similarly terse and beautiful, is the fast-sailing ship of the sea. For this we are indebted to Job also. Speaking of man’s days, he exclaims, “They are passed away as the swift ships!” As to some spectator, stationed on some tall cliff adjacent to the sea, the sight of vessels gliding over the pathless deep—to the east, one fast

fading from the view; to the west, the dim outline of another, gradually growing more distinct—so to the prophet appeared the days of man. In quick succession one goeth and another cometh. Soon as one day is watched sail through the channel of time, watched till it dwindleth to a speck on the far-off waves, and then, with its burden of blessing and privilege, disappears, another is descried breasting the billows, and, with all canvas crowded, speeding on in the wake of its predecessor. Still another figure of rare significance and pathos is the thin, evanescent vapor. Alluding to the brevity, the frailty of human life, St. James remarks: “It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.” Just as the morning mist, entering the dim valley, lingers awhile, but is soon dispelled by the red rays which flash from the distant hills, so, son of man, your life broods over this “valley of tears,” till suddenly the destroyer’s darts “loose the silver cord,” and you gasp,

What is this absorbs me quite,
Steals my senses, steals my sight,
Draws my spirit, draws my breath?
Tell me, my soul, can this be death?

But of all the metaphors employed, the most touching, perhaps, is that used by Isaiah in our text, where, chanting the dirge of the living and the dead, he exclaims, “We all do fade as a leaf!” The fading leaf! Ah! what eye has not seen inscribed hereon, “True emblem of my short life?” And what heart has not occasionally softened into tender melancholy at the sight? “We all do fade as a leaf.” So have we said when standing in the old village church-yard, where rest our loved ones in the silent sleep of death. So have we said when treading the lone forest pathway, while musing on the days of yore. “We all do fade as a leaf.” So has sighed the poet, moaned the philosopher, complained

the devotee of wealth and power. "We all do fade as a leaf." This knell will be sung until the angel who stands with one foot on the sea and one on land, swears by Him that liveth forever and ever, time shall be no more!

But in order that we may profit by the text, let us consider more closely the similitude employed, and then the lesson it so obviously suggests. Consider,

I. The striking similitude. "We all do fade as a leaf."

There were two of our race to whom this similitude will not apply. "Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him." The Tishbite was borne aloft in "a chariot of fire," and, outstripping "the rider of the pale horse," rested not till his burning wheels passed through the gates of pearl. But of the rest of us the similitude holds true; "*we all* do fade as a leaf." A poet has sung,

Leaves have their time to fall,
And flowers to wither at the north wind's breath.

But, strictly speaking, they have their *times*, and we may mention *spring-time* as one of these. True, with that delightful season of the year we are wont to associate things widely foreign to the fading leaf. Spring-time! The hoary mountains exchange their white robes for a garment of green, interwoven with flowers of countless hues. Spring-time! The long-fettered fountains break from their chains, and skip adown the hill-sides, laughing in wild glee. Spring-time! The songsters return from a distant clime, and rejoice as they warble out of sweet-scented bushes, blossoming grain, and tall trees' crest. Spring-time! There are violets blue and lilies fair lining the path, while overhead, clustering close, dance the green leaves as we pass.

Certainly this picture is correct; but it is not rendered less so when to the rich variety of spring scenery is added "the sear and yellow leaf." The eye, enchanted with the

growing glories of nature, may overlook it, but yonder it droops low in the somber shade, while higher it sparkles in the solar fire. Lo! we come to its burial; for even now the evening zephyr steals softly by, and with silken cords fresh from the spider's web gently bears it below.

How many a leaf thus fades in youth! Many a mortal does the same. Ah! while the world rolls on in its gayety and folly, while around is heard the dance, and the laugh, and the festive song, what numbers are stricken with anguish because "Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away!" Scarce a family can be found but has lost some of its members ere they attained their prime. Awhile they bloomed in beauty and adorned the homes to which they belonged; but seized in the cruel grasp of an early decay, they withered from our midst, and dropped into an early grave. We sorrow for them; for "'tis hard to die in spring-time." Life is never arrayed in such gorgeous rainbow colors as then. Fancy's soft brush glides over the canvas and enriches the glowing prospect by making "distance lend enchantment to the view." The youth's eye flashes, while his breast heaves with a strange, wild joy, as he contemplates the future. What may not his strong arm and roused energies accomplish? He may scale heights of honor yet untrodden, and "glory in what others dared but do." Generations to come may boast of him, and angels deem it a privilege to welcome him to their everlasting rest. But O to die without one struggle in life's arena—it is hard, hard! However dull earth may yet become, however often "I would not live alway" may yet startle the night-breeze, now the boy would linger into manhood, and from manhood into age. "Life, life! not the gates of the grave," is his reiterated request. "Let me share in life's sorrows, take part in its conflicts, reap of its laurels," and "come to the grave in a full age, like a shock

of corn cometh in its season." Ah! only religion can impart resignation to the weeping one. She has a balm for every wound, a cordial for every fear. She shows the dying youth a glorious home beyond the star-lit sky, and whispers, "Yonder amongst those many mansions is thy portion fair." She assures him that it is for some wise purpose now wrapt in obscurity, but soon to be made clear as the noon-day, that he is called home. She promises him that although he has done but little for the Saviour here, yet for his faithfulness in that which is least he shall "receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." She thus enables him to meekly kneel in his Gethsemane and pray: "O my Father, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." Ay, and when his last hour comes, though it be his sunny spring-time, she enables him to die without a murmur, calmly as the falling leaf to take his place beneath "the clods of the valley."

But another leaf-fading season is *the summer*.

Hail, sweet succession of spring! Stormy as thy reign may yet be, all hearts greet thee! Not that we had wearied of thine illustrious predecessor, but because thou wilt enlarge the empire and perfect the plans she so nobly began. What stir, labor, and activity are now visible! All things seem imbued with a new impulse, and like a throng of eager racers, to press forward to the goal. Ships pierce to the sullen iceberg's home, and return laden with the spoils of the sea. The Norwegian tills his cold, craggy hills, and hastens for the harvest. In more sunny climes the reaper goes forth with sickle sharp, and gathers in the golden grain. In the shady streamlet the beaver builds his dam, and makes ready for his winter store. The bee stops not to play, but swiftly hies to and from its crevice in the rock. "The ant, consider her ways and be wise: which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest."

Yet this too, I remark, is a *leaf-fading* season. No lover of an early ramble, or of a quiet stroll at even-tide, can fail to observe it. The gardens, and the groves, and the golden streaks in the verdant forest, proclaim that in the midst of life they are in death. Ah! since spring-time cruel fate has been busy there. Noxious vapors have ascended from the low, dank marsh, and with strange, bright fire consumed the bloom on many a luxuriant leaf; angry storms have rallied to battle, and prostrated twigs, branches, and whole trees, in their foaming course; the spear of the thunder-cloud has darted on its mission, and in a moment blackened the fairest foliage of the forest. Innumerable insects, floating in the air, have lighted on the tender boughs, and wasted life and beauty in their stay. Now, ever and anon leaves come quivering to the ground. At times, indeed, there are few that fall, but again they are borne thick and fast to their resting-place. Already the fallen strew the soil, and yet others are to follow, for the stem which holds them to life is decayed; another breeze, and the attenuated fibers are asunder.

Do leaves thus fade in their maturity? with multitudes of men it is the same.

Our eyes have seen the rosy light
Of youth's soft cheek decay,
And fate descend in sudden night
On manhood's middle day.

How often does "the last enemy, which is death," take the field and cause even the strong man to bite the dust! He comes in the raging fever, which kindles a strange fire in the veins and exhausts the fountain of life. He comes in "the pestilence that walketh in darkness" and with stealthy step slayeth its hundreds in a night. He comes in "the destruction that wasteth at noonday"—the hectic flush on the pallid cheek, which friends fondly flatter them-

selves indicative of health, but a partner's watchful eye discerns to be the herald of approaching doom. He comes in "the arrow that flieth by day" and, unseen by friend or foe, wingeth its way to the fatal mark. "A thousand fall at our side, and ten thousand at our right-hand." The hardy woodman, the busy speculator, the bearer of the lance, the heir of empire, and the king of men—these "go to their long home, and the mourners go about the streets."

Yet another leaf-fading season is *autumn*. Now full oft

The day is cold and dark and dreary;
It rains, and the wind is never weary;
The vine still clings to the moldering wall,
But at every gust the dead leaves fall,
And the day is dark and dreary.

When finally the clouds roll away and the warm sunshine floods hill and dale, we go forth and wander again where the violets grew and the wild jasmine bloomed in the breeze. Nature is lovely still, and still points up to nature's God. A visible change, however, has taken place in the forest under ~~whose~~ shady canopy we were wont to muse. A number of the trees are now leafless and bare; on others a few stray leaves hang still, but their pale, wan hues show that their hold upon life is fast waxing weak. Stately groups stand here and there with leaves yet on, but they are all of an amber tint, and cannot long endure. The pine, the holly, and the live-oak, retain their strength and freshness, but sooner or later even these share the common fate. Time has at last come to demolish the summer woods. Vain is it to resist the destroyer of thrones, and of cities, and of mighty empires. The day of doom is come, and the rustling leaves, which once laughed defiance at disease, now wither and fall to the ground.

Must leaves thus fade at last? "it is appointed unto man once to die." "The days of our years are three-score years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be four-score

years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.” “Our fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live forever?” Did not Adam, after tabernacling here nine hundred and thirty years, die? Did not Moses, when “his eye was not yet dim, nor his natural force abated,” ascend Mount Nebo, and there yield up the ghost? Did not David, “after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fall asleep, and see corruption?” Did not Hezekiah, after witnessing the shadow in the sun-dial of Ahaz return ten degrees, as a sign that his life should be prolonged, yet die, and go down into the dark pit? Where is Isaiah, who sung in such magnificent strains of the coming Messiah? Where is Paul, who preached the gospel from Antioch around about, even to Illyricum? Think of the mighty conquerors of the past. Alexander overran most of the then known world; yet, as ran the epitaph upon his tomb—“A tomb sufficient for the man for whom the world was not sufficient.” Hannibal was a man of prowess, flushed with victory, weighty in influence, the terror of his times; yet a Roman satirist suggests—“Weigh the dust of Hannibal!” Yes, the decree has gone forth, “Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” We may, “by reason of strength,” survive our comrades, and linger on till the autumn of life sets in, but then comes the stern destroyer, time, to give us battle, and before his iron tread the last lone leaf of humanity must tremble and expire. My aged brethren, your “countenances will soon change, and ye be sent away.”

The use to be made of the text is obvious. It should inculcate *humility*. “We all do fade as a leaf,” then how unseemly that pride, that inordinate self-esteem we so frequently exhibit! Birth, rank, office, learning, wealth—grounds on which men delight to plume themselves—what are these but bright branches of the same decaying tree?

From heights of fame and power, whence play continually the lute-like breezes of flattery and applause, we must descend. Sooner or later the chill of death will penetrate the fibers of our hearts, and remove us from the present, however elevated our position or attractive our surroundings.

The text should stimulate to *watchfulness*. Spring, summer, autumn; youth, manhood, age; whatever may be the season, “we know not what a day may bring forth.” Do not leaves which wave in the early dawn oft lie on the cold, dank sward ere the night shadows fall? And do not men oft die when length of days seems before them, and sunny hopes beck them on? We cannot be too well prepared for the end. Death, to us, is no ordinary event. “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” The present life is a probation. With the cessation of life the probation expires, and then reward or punishment will be administered “according to the deeds done in the body.” This being so, what diligence should we give “to make our calling and election sure?” It may be that some of you are living “without hope, and without God in the world.” You have not on “the wedding-garment,” “the fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of saints.” You live as though life had no sear and yellow leaf; as though its branches flourished in perpetual green; as though no blight of decay or frost of death ever visited its atmosphere. Awake, ye careless ones!

You must grow old too
Beneath the autumn sky;
But lovelier and brighter your lives may grow,
Like leaves before they die:
Brighter with kind deeds,
With hopes and gladness given,
Till the leaf falls down from the withered tree,
And the spirit is in heaven.

The text should induce *patience*, “We all do fade as a

leaf;" then how soon will the days of our sighing be ended! To many life is but a weariness and pain; death is viewed as the goal of their hopes, the gate-way to fruition. Successive calamities have befallen them, robbing earth of its beauty and attractiveness; and now, with eyes that glisten, "they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly." Sorrowing one, be of good cheer. Not long will it be before the Master opens the crystal gate for thy weary feet to enter in. It may be nearer than thou thinkest; only bear patiently thy cross, and in time thou shalt wear the crown. O when this material shall be dissolved, the long-pent spirit shall be loosed from its prison-house, and soar away to meet its God; when angel forms shall burst upon the trembling gaze, and the glories of the New Jerusalem loom near at hand; when it feels that it is at last safe forever, far beyond the reach of change and death—what will be its rapture, what its song!

The woods in autumn present a fascinating spectacle. It is beauty, but it is the beauty of decay. We find ourselves sighing, yearning for something more permanent, something more satisfying. We shall have it in heaven. Its scenes have upon them an immaculate freshness and bloom; its glory is unfading and eternal. There every thing is peace. The eternity of Him from whom this glory emanates will be the pledge of its certain perpetuity. Its permanent duration is secured by the inviolable fidelity of Him who has promised it, and solemnly ratified it by the infinitely meritorious efficacy of the blood through which we are to obtain it. God grant that when done with earth those eyes of yours, which have oft gazed so fondly on perishable loveliness, may be prepared to behold the All-beautiful himself, the Man of Nazareth, the crucified but risen Redeemer!

One by one they fall and fade,
Some in the sunshine, some in the shade,
Some in the light of glowing noon,
Some 'neath the cold and quiet moon;
One whirleth here, one falleth there,
Till the ground is covered, the bough is bare;
So every field of earth receives
These fading, falling, dying leaves.

One by one we fall and fade,
Some in the sunshine, some in the shade,
Some in the bright, unclouded light,
Some in the calm and quiet night;
One mourneth here, one parteth there,
Till the soul is weary, the heart is bare;
So every field of earth receives
These fading hearts, these dying leaves.

SERMON XIII.

THE RICH FOOL.

“And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.” (Luke xii. 16-21.)

THE parables of our Lord are a rich treasury of heavenly instruction. Illustrating by familiar incidents the most solemn and important truths, they commend themselves not only to the wise, but also to the simple, charming each by their variety, their fitness, and their force. They attest, moreover, the character of their author. Dropping from his lips, not as the hoarded honey of laborious years, but as the fresher gushings of unfathomed founts, they surprise by the mental strength which they discover, and irresistibly suggest the divinity of their birth. “Never man spake like this man.” The unpremeditated product of the hour, his parables—even hostile criticism has confessed—are paragons of wisdom and of worth.

It is a significant fact that we are indebted indirectly for many of these parables to human opposition. It affords, we think, a striking comment on the hopeful assurance of the pious Asaph: “Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee; the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.” The

unappreciative spirit of his audience, after witnessing an astounding miracle, evoked from Christ the parable of the sower. The question propounded by the wounded vanity of a disappointed disputant, "Who is my neighbor?" was met by relating the parable of the good Samaritan. The murmurings of scribes and Pharisees, because of his interest in publicans and sinners, gave rise to three analogous parables of the lost sheep, the lost shekel, and the lost son. So the untimely interruption of a covetous though defrauded heir occasioned the parable of the rich fool.

We shall discourse to you on the folly and the fate of the individual mentioned in the text. Notice,

I. His Folly. Of this we have several undeniable proofs.

1. His skepticism. This, though not expressly asserted in the parable, is nevertheless fairly implied. And what gross folly thereby attaches to him! A wealthy and prosperous husbandman; his opportunity for acquiring a knowledge of Jehovah could scarcely be surpassed. We presume that the sacred oracles, so far as given, were at his command. There the Most High shone out in the greatness of his strength, in the beauty of his holiness, and in the wonders of his love. In addition to revelation, he had for his instruction the vast volume of nature. His home, his daily occupation, presented him continually with memorials of the infinite and invisible. Walking amid scenes instinct with the presence and power of Jehovah—his eye resting on the spreading blade, the clambering vine, the fruitful olive, and the princely palm; his ear echoing with the roll of thunder, the splash of water-falls, the song of birds, and the lullaby of ten thousand insects—each step he took told of the being and the bounty of a God. It is not every one who is so favorably situated. And this suggests that our surroundings may become sacred; our very employment may increase our responsibility. There are

thousands who, doomed to drudge in the heart of crowded cities, see but little of the works of God. They must travel miles before they can look on a wild rill, or a green slope, or a sweep of unbroken sky. And we do hold that skepticism, when occurring, is less culpable in their case than in the case of those whose privilege it is to have their home and avocation among rural solitudes. The inhabitants of large cities, especially the laboring classes, are not only deprived of the opportunities of acquainting themselves with the handiwork of God, but even in their toil so many secondary causes intervene between them and the Great First Cause that they are in constant danger of surrendering themselves to a low materialism, and of ascribing to the creature the glory due to the Creator. The truth is, they see more of man and less of God. For instance, the pale operative, weaving into gay and gorgeous fabrics the raw material furnished by his master, has never seen, it may be, the broad fields which, under Heaven's fostering care, present their white clusters for the loom. The busy builder, smoothing the rude planks that have been brought to him from afar, adjusting them for a place in palace, hall, or cot, has never entered, it may be, the majestic forest from whose hoary giants they have sprung. The trembling lapidary, polishing stones that are to decorate the coronets of kings, or to sparkle on the bosoms of the fair, has never stood, it may be, by the streams from whose sands they have been sifted, or within the caves among whose crystals they were long concealed.

We have observed how advantageous were the circumstances which distinguished the rich husbandman of the text. He was brought into immediate contact with nature. He was set down, as it were, in the midst of a magnificent temple, whose every pillar, arch, and roof told of the wisdom and power of the Builder. The grandeur, the beauty,

the harmony, the design of creation were before him. There was all that was necessary to inspire in him the most sanguine belief in the being and perfections of Jehovah. And could doubt arise, he had but to glance abroad, and reassurance might flow in from smiling meadow and wood-crowned height, joyous river and beaming sky. Yet of this very individual we learn that, notwithstanding the indubitable evidences which surrounded him, he had been living and still lived in total disregard of the Creator. The sun went forth in his strength, moon and stars walked in their brightness, but seemingly without suggesting a thought of Him who upholdeth them, and who called them all by name. "The ground brought forth plentifully," yielding the full corn in the ear, the fruit of the olive and the vine, but never reminding of Him who giveth the dew in its season, and sendeth the early and latter rains. The rich husbandman saw Deity only in self, and yielded devotion only to sense. It was "my fruits" and "my goods;" it was, "Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." Well might Jehovah, contemplating this man from within the veil, contrasting his opportunities with their improvement, say to him, "Thou fool!" And yet, alas! my friends, cases of similar, if not greater, folly abound at the present day. Even in this favored America of ours, with the light of the gospel shining upon it, and the glories of nature everywhere mantling its surface, there are men as skeptical as the rich husbandman of the text. Living amid the richest displays of creative might, with mountains frowning on their indifference, and brooks chanting the dirge of their deadness; with valleys putting to shame their ingratitude, and skies which might well soften obstinacy and pride, they see, they acknowledge no God. It is difficult for us to understand how any man, pretending to sound sense, can become either avowedly or practi-

cally a skeptic. Heaven and earth are full of the glory of the Lord. From the lake, sleeping in calm loveliness, to the firmament, alive with its countless stars; from the flower, opening its petals to the sip of the descending dew, to the forest, burdened with beauty and waving in summer pride; from the silvery mists, ascending the hill-side on wings of the wind, to the roseate clouds which curtain the couch of declining day; from the tiny ephemera, that floats in the air, to the brightest genius that swims in an atmosphere of praise—all nature, in whatever form, and under whatever aspect, loudly proclaims: “Great is the Lord, and of great power; his understanding is infinite!”

2. A second proof of the folly of the rich man is found in *his selfishness*.

Mutual dependence is the law of the universe. As far as it relates to the human race, the wisdom of this arrangement is at once apparent. Occasion is thus offered for the development of those kindly sentiments and feelings which in themselves constitute no inconsiderable part of our happiness. If we would consult our true interest, we shall recognize this dependence, and seek, in ministering to the happiness of others, those elements so essential to our own. To ignore this law, to live solely to self, seeking therein our highest satisfaction and delight, is irrational and criminal, and can result only in bitter disappointment. It is to attempt to slake our thirst from broken cisterns which can hold no water; it is to pursue the phantom of the desert, which smiles in its airy beauty, and beckons but to destroy. The rich husbandman was intensely selfish. He lived only for the aggrandizement of self; he sought enjoyment only in the gratification of self. His circumstances were favorable to the attainment of the maximum of human bliss. He was “rich.” His “ground brought forth plentifully.” From hill-side and plain, on beasts of burden and

on the shoulders of strong men, came year after year an increasing harvest of wheat and of barley, of vines and fig-trees and pomegranates, of oil, olives, and honey. There was more than enough for him and his dependents. This abundance he might have employed in acts of benevolence, reaping therefrom that luxury of joy which is the inseparable concomitant of kindness, and so distinguished an ingredient in the happiness of man. The only effect of his great prosperity was to perplex him as to how he could best dispose of his goods to the sole advantage of self. His anxious thought was, "What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?" No room! Surely, O reason, for once thou art fallen from thy pedestal! No room! when there were thousands of outcasts in Israel soliciting a morsel of bread. No room! when there were widows struggling with fierce penury, and orphans all shelterless and sorrowful. No room! when everywhere might be met the poor and the maimed, and the halt and the blind. Fool indeed was the rich man—lost alike to truth, to feeling, and to conscience—when he sighed for more capacious barns to stow away the superfluity which, wisely and providently dispensed, would have opened to his soul a flood-tide of serenest peace! And yet this selfishness of his, though extreme, is by no means exceptional. There are more fools in this respect than he who some eighteen centuries ago lived and died in the far East. There are many in our land to whom God has given a fortune in stewardship, who hold it with a grip of iron, hoarding it away with miserly care—if not in barns, in banks and stocks and bonds—and who spend it only in pandering to self. There are men who have enough and to spare—whose fields yield them a rich harvest, whose merchandise brings them a high percentage, whose profession, whose trade, gives them more than a competency—who turn away from the cry of suffer-

ing, and refuse to lend a hand to the helpless. Their only thought is, “How shall I best dispose of the surplus of my means to personal advantage? what investments for my savings will I find the safest and most profitable? in what way will I succeed in augmenting my principal and securing ease and comfort to myself the remainder of my days?” Fools! as if their superabundance, be it more or less, was intended only to foster and strengthen their inherent and hereditary selfishness. “When rain from heaven has filled a basin on the mountain-top, the reservoir overflows, and so sends down a shower to refresh the valley below; it is for a similar purpose that God, in his providential government, fills the cups of those who stand in the high places of the earth, that they may distribute the blessing among those who occupy a lower place in the scale of prosperity.” The opportunity is thus given for the cultivation of that spirit of benevolence which raises human nature to a likeness to the Infinite, and is itself a stream of ineffable and heavenly delight—a disposition lost to us by the fall, but regained by faith in the atonement of the Saviour. The method of reserving all for self, using charitably nothing we may possess above the necessaries and conveniences of life, contravenes the Divine will, and can only end in rendering more complete our degradation and misery. Riches—whatever of “this world’s goods” we possess, after supplying the ordinary wants of ourselves and those immediately related to us—have their legitimate place when reserved or profitably invested for the purpose of enabling us to relieve the poor, to succor the distressed, and to extend the gospel as occasion may require. They thus become the means of ennobling our character and of increasing our happiness. Hoarded as our portion, regardless of the good of others, they burden us while we live and condemn us when we die.

3. A third proof of the folly of the rich man is found in his *sensuality*.

There is something in the human soul that craves and will be satisfied with nothing less than infinitude. It is vain to attempt to assuage this deep and universal longing with what is earthly and perishable. The soul rises far above the present, its riches, honors, and delights, and sighs for a blessedness which no worldly circumstances, however favorable, can impart. The soul was made to find its chief enjoyment in God; he is its true rest, the center of its equipoise, the source from which springs its enduring peace. The folly of men is that, sensible of their inward want, they apply not to Him who can satisfy it, but wander restlessly through life seeking solace from the empty and unstable. It was thus with the rich husbandman of the text. He was conscious of an unrepressed longing for something brighter and better than he had yet experienced. Not all his wealth had brought him happiness. The glow of pleasure which accompanied the song of reapers and the shoutings for the vintage was but transient—a parting ray enlivening cold summits of his being, a flashing meteor crossing for a moment the firmament of his night. There was still unrest, sad and mournful, like the moaning of waves on a barren strand. At times his soul, tired of its fruitless importunity, would break out in a paroxysm and demand of him a bliss proportionate to its vast capacities. His crime it was to mistake the answer to this yearning. He thought that more abundant material provisions would satisfy its craving. “I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.” Was ever reasoning more absurd? How groveling his conception of a deathless soul! how low his estimate of the majesty of man! And yet, my friends, in his degraded sensual-

ity, he but exemplifies existing character. Are there not those among us who, like him, are seeking their highest good, their most anticipated future, in mere worldly ease, mere carnal gratification, mere temporal advancement? Look at the voluptuary: his delight the banquet, with its delicious viands, its foaming wine-cups, its song and dance, and midnight revelry. Look at the worshiper of mammon, the devotee of wealth: his joy the glittering silver, the lands broad and fertile, the houses many and magnificent. Look at the lover of fame: his meat and drink the breath of popular applause, the adulation of consenting nations, the pomp and pride of circumstance and place. Fools are they, no less than the rich man, to think with such husks as these to satisfy an immortal soul!

4. A fourth proof of the folly of the rich man is found in *his self-confident assumption of long life.*

Death is a fixed fact from which there is no escape. It is, moreover, the most momentous crisis of our being, as ushering us into an unknown state, and determining our final destiny. A wise man will live as though each day might be his last. For death is not only certain, but it is an event which may befall us at any moment. It is to be lamented that the majority of men live as though confident of long life. "Their inward thought is that their houses shall continue forever, and their dwelling-places to all generations. This their way is their folly." To this class belonged the rich husbandman of the text. "Soul," he said, "thou hast much goods laid up for *many years.*" How presumptuous, how foolish! It would seem as if men were recreant to reason, to revelation and experience, when they can thus hide from themselves the possible proximity of death. All terrestrial things proclaim to us our doom. Never does the sun go down in the west, covered with clouds, or fringing the heavens with amber and gold, but

it points to life's setting, and suggests the beauty or the blackness which shall mark it. Never does a flower wither in our gardens, and bow its graceful head in the dust, but it teaches us that all flesh is as grass, and the goodness thereof as the flower of the field: the grass withereth and the flower thereof falleth away. Never do the leaves put on their crimson robes in autumn but they tell of decay which, sooner or later, must overtake the proudest and strongest, and warn us to prepare to die. O the insane folly of those who live as though there were no death and no grave! O the insane folly of those who presume on long life, and consider not their latter end!

From the folly of the rich husbandman let us turn to consider,

II. His Fate. And here we shall be brief.

1. It was *dreadful*. He died suddenly and unexpectedly. He died amidst a profusion of worldly goods. His riches could not save him! He died in a manner which leaves no ground to believe that he entered into the joys of the righteous. How dreadful! Dreadful too will be the fate of all who imitate his folly. There is no respect of persons with God. Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, will he render to every soul of man that doeth evil. O the endless tribulation that awaits the wicked! How the heart quivers and the tongue falters as we think of it! God shall smite, and shall not spare!

2. The fate of the rich husbandman, though dreadful, was *deserved*.

To what end was he endowed with reason, with conscience, with affections, if not to glorify God? To what end was his cup of material plenty filled to overflowing, if not to excite his gratitude and prompt him to holy obedience? Just was God when, after waiting year after year in vain, he commanded the barren tree to be cut down;

and just will he be should he for similar folly sentence any of us to perdition. We know that the Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. He desireth not the death of the sinner, but would rather that he should turn and live. When, however, his mercies are abused, when his long-suffering is despised, what remains for him but to punish? Were sinners permitted to sin with impunity, were no penalty attached to transgression, the government of God would come to be regarded as a myth, and rebellion and anarchy prevail throughout his dominions. Think not, then, O sinner, to escape punishment, if you continue impenitent. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

A word of caution in conclusion.

Let us shun skepticism. We may not be avowed atheists, but there is a forgetfulness of God practically as dangerous as a denial of his existence. Let him be to us not a cold abstraction, but a living presence. Let us see him everywhere. Let nature be to us an expanded volume, rich in divine instruction, a splendid mirror revealing the Creator's perfections. Let the flowers breathe his sweet-ness; let the streams sing his goodness; let the ocean tell his power; let the mountains proclaim his majesty; let the stars show forth his glory.

Let us subdue selfishness. Let us recognize the brotherhood of man by the generous sympathy flowing from our hearts. Let loving beneficence characterize our lives. Perish the thought of living only for self! "As we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men."

Let us rise superior to the senses. Let us not attempt in any way to satisfy spiritual craving with material food. There is indeed ease for the soul, but it is only to be found in Him who said, "Come unto *Me*, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." There is food for

the soul—it is “the bread that cometh down from heaven;” there is drink for the soul—it is “the water of life, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb;” there is merry-making for the soul—it is the “joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

Let us not be self-confident as to continued life. Philip of Macedon commanded one of his pages to come every morning to his chamber and cry aloud, “Philip, remember thou art mortal!” Memorable at Saladin’s banquet to Richard Cœur de Leon—ever memorable among the banners and pennons, the trophies of battles won and kingdoms overthrown—is the long lance displaying a shroud, “the banner of death, with this impressive inscription: ‘Saladin, king of kings; Saladin, victor of victors; Saladin must die.’”

SERMON XIV

TABOR.

“And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening. And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him. And it came to pass as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: not knowing what he said. While he thus spake, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them; and they feared as they entered into the cloud. And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son; hear him. And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone. And they kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen.” (Luke ix. 28-36.)

IN the story of Jesus we have a drama of unrivaled beauty, pathos, and significance. Three times he appears on the stage of life, and each successive time with increased interest. First, as a tender babe, calmly reposing in a rude manger at Bethlehem, the blue canopy overhead radiant with angelic choirs, who chant their sweetest lays in honor of his birth. Next, disputing with grave doctors beneath the venerable shade of broad-leaved palms, a mere youth of twelve, with rose-tints on his chubby cheeks, no wrinkle furrowing his snowy brow, and the wild mountain breeze playing lovingly with his light, luxuriant locks. Again the dim curtain is withdrawn, and for three years—beginning with his baptism at the Jordan and the descent of the

divine Dove upon him—he moves before us in mingled majesty, love, and awe. Now on some delightful slope, its groves gorgeous with the rich drapery of spring, its atmosphere balmy with the bursting blossoms, he startles the quiet scene with deep notes of warning; then on some verdant plain, its western walls bathed in the radiance of the setting sun, its lake-line deepening with the dusky hue of approaching twilight, his words fall like rain-drops on a thirsty soil. Now in a chamber, where raging fever laps up the life-fount of an aged loved one, he bids the cruel foe depart, and it obeys; then by the way-side where two blind men bewail their fate in tones which rise above the din of a moving multitude, he pauses, and questioning their wish, floods daylight through their orbs' dark dungeon. Now asleep in the midst of a storm on Galilee's sea, tumultuous billows leaping madly over the helpless bark, he is awakened by his frightened disciples, and at his behest the troubled elements sink down in quiet rest. Then weeping by the new-made grave of Lazarus, a sorrowing group surrounding him, he directs the stone to be rolled away, and thundering forth his omnifac will, compels captivity to yield its prey. Now crossing Kedron's babbling brook, and bowing low in the gloomy shadow of Gethsemane, he dyes the green turf with his sacred blood. Then basely betrayed into the hands of his enemies and hurried to Calvary, he sustains a weight of woe which would have crushed worlds; and while night throws her mantle over the awful tragedy, and rocks gape wide in horror at the scene, he bleeds, agonizes, and dies. Now low in a sepulcher, around which cluster the vine, the lily, and the fig-tree, he lies, guarded by grim soldiers who pace to and fro in the pale moonbeams. Then starting into life, making “vain the stone, the watch, the seal,” he soars aloft in triumph, passing suns in his flight, and is welcomed by angels, hymned

by the redeemed, throned by the Father, and forever at rest.

Our text presents him on Mount Tabor, and commemo-
rates one of those few delightful episodes which, as stars
that flash on the breast of a midnight storm, occasionally
illumine his deeply sad and sorrowful career. The occa-
sion of his being on Tabor, and the circumstances which
transpired during his stay there, will form the topics of con-
sideration. We will notice,

I. What brought him on Tabor.

Certainly not a mere love of the beautiful and the sub-
lime. This, indeed, brought many a warm, gushing spirit
to its summit. Tabor was remarkable for its glorious as-
pect and surrounding scenery. "Tabor among the mount-
ains" was deemed fit emblem of Nebuchadnezzar with his
towering pomp and helmeted legions amid the chariots of
Egypt. An immense, irregular cone, its declivities dotted
with innumerable shrubs and wide-spreading oaks, carpeted
with myriads of flowers and ferns, and sparkling with tiny
rills that danced over moss-covered rocks, no mount bore
itself more grandly. The prospect from the top was, for
magnificence, variety, and historic association, unsurpassed
by aught on earth. In the sweet valley beneath slept the
dust of Sisera's haughty host, smitten down by the con-
quering hands of Barak. To the south rose Gilboa, where
"Saul and Jonathan, lovely and pleasant in their lives, in
their death were not divided." Mount Carmel was visible,
and the breezes which came from its broad table-lands were
perfumed with the prayers of Elijah. Snowy peaks peered
above the dull haze to the north, marking the spot whence
came the tall cedars of Lebanon. Far down in the east,
lapped in God's love, Galilee lay like a mirror, embosomed
in its rounded and beautiful but treeless hills. Jordan
rolled on to its mysterious bourne, memorable in that there

was its swelling tide driven back, and its hard bed made a highway for man. The ocean rolled in the distance, and beneath its blue billows were the stranded ships of Tarshish. But this scene, so surpassingly lovely and attractive to Jewish eye, brought not the Saviour to Tabor. What could all the beauty and glory of this sin-dimmed world be to the Unsearchable? “It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in.” Even then was he gazing upon another land, before whose celestial splendor earth paled as the twinkling star in the blaze of the rising day. Its cloudless skies were around him; its breezes, laden with the richest odors, fanned him; its everlasting hills, sea of glass, and river clear as crystal swept before him. Its God-built city, with pellucid portals, palaces, and thrones, was mirrored on his vision; and the new song of its glorified inhabitants, who knew neither sorrow nor sin, fell upon his ear—“Worthy, worthy is the Lamb!”

We think the true key to his being on Tabor is found in an incident which had recently transpired. But “six or eight days” had elapsed since Jesus had declared to his disciples the destiny awaiting him on earth. This he did in order to correct an impression fast deepening in their minds respecting his mission. They, as indeed vast multitudes besides, seem to have concluded, in their carnal estimate of Scripture, that the special work of Messiah was to deliver the Jewish nation from oppression, lead them forth conquering and to conquer; and subduing the ends of the earth to his scepter, establish an everlasting dominion at Jerusalem. Without doubt this notion had operated powerfully in inducing them to leave all and follow him, as they might reasonably expect to be amply compensated for whatever self-denial or inconvenience they endured in his

service. His chosen ones, who were probably to reign with him, they trod delighted at his side, witnessed with high elation his miracles testifying his Messiahship, and eagerly longed for the period to arrive when, announcing his grand mission, the whole nation, as one man, would flock to his standard. Ay, already in anticipation they saw Judah's slumbering sword leap from its scabbard, "the Lion of the tribe" at its head, "on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords;" proud empires trembling at his tread, and mighty armies and valiant men crouching at his feet. The Saviour, to whom was presented a far different picture, lost no time in dispelling their wild dreams. On the road to Cesarea Philippi the unvarnished truth was told them. Instead of esteemed and honored, he was to be "despised and rejected of men." Instead of surrounded by swelling ranks, he was to be left solitary, deserted even by those in whose friendship he mostly confided. Instead of leading the vanquished to victory, avenging their wrongs, he himself was to be a prisoner, mocked, spat upon, and scourged. Instead of a throne and the trappings of royalty, there were in the perspective darkness, a cross, a tomb. His only crown on earth was to be a crown of thorns. "The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again," was his emphatic declaration to his disciples. How, in what manner, they received this intelligence, blighting their hopes in the bud, we are not left to conjecture. Sorrow, disappointment, and chagrin prevailed. Peter, with characteristic forwardness, took the Saviour apart and rebuked him: "Be it far from thee Lord," said he; "this shall not come unto thee." But he turned, and said unto Peter: "Get thee behind me, Satan; for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men."

And then—that there might not be the least mistake—he said to them all: “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.”

Now this incident, we think, gives the key to our Saviour’s being on Tabor. The coasts of Cesarea Philippi were reached, and days rolled by; but while the inspired writers observe profound silence respecting this visit, it is only natural to suppose that it was marked by sorrow and dejection on the part of the disciples. As ivy festoons, torn by some rude blast from the crumbling parapets, and pinning to be restored to their ruined resting-place, were they. And their wish ungratified, a cold, withering distrust was stealing over them. True, they still followed the Saviour, but not with the quick, elastic step of old. Ever and anon they turned aside and whispered to each other of him. Can he indeed be the hope of Israel? one would inquire. Did not the prophet speak of him as a “Star to come out of Jacob, and a Scepter to rise out of Israel?” And were there not to be regal preparations for his coming, the filling up of valleys, the leveling of hills, and the making of highways through the pathless deserts? Was he not to “have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth?” Were not “they that dwell in the wilderness to bow before him, and his enemies to lick the dust?” Was he not to “live, and to him be given the gold of Sheba; prayer also to be made for him continually, and daily shall he be praised?” And was he not to make Jerusalem “an eternal excellency, and the joy of many generations?” But how different what this man tells us! His are to be the red of scorn and the scarlet of mockery; no crown is to encircle his brow; our loved land is to lie waste and desolate still; and as for us, tribulation is to be our portion. Can this be the Messiah? Surely not!

Our Saviour, from whom nothing was concealed, we may suppose, marked their conduct. No doubt a wave of unutterable sadness rolled over his soul as he thought of their blind unbelief. Notwithstanding all his wonderful works, they were now on the very verge of apostasy. Knit to them, however, by bonds of the purest love, he resolves on their salvation. But to this end *their faith must be increased*. Hence “it came to pass [mark the connection] about an eight days *after these sayings*, he took Peter and John and James [who probably were chief among the disciples], and went up into a mountain to pray.” Consider,

II. What transpired during their stay there.

We discern Jesus on Tabor, kneeling in earnest prayer for his disciples. Hour after hour took wings and flew away; the sun painted with purple the clouds which hovered around Carmel, and finally disappeared amid the foam-crested waves of the distant deep; stars came clustering forth, and with a mystic glow illuminated the scene; the night breeze rustled by, evoking music from the tall grass where slept the disciples, weary of watching; still the Saviour prayed on. At last the answer comes. He who had heard patriarchs and prophets in the past, whose ear is ever open to the cries of his people, hears his own beloved Son. Lo! “as he prayed the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering.” Woke by some mysterious impulse, the disciples rise, and find Jesus “*transfigured before them.*”

Where were their doubts? Vanished as the mists of the valley before the meridian rays of a vernal sun. There could be no mistake with respect to his character now. About that transcendent being there was something more than earthly. “His form, which had been bent under a load of sorrow (a bend more glorious than the bend of the rainbow), now erected itself like the palm-tree from press-

ure."* His face, on which deep lines of grief had long been implanted, suddenly outshone the most brilliant orb that rolled in the dark expanse above him. His eyes, soft and liquid, sparkled with fire. "His hair was white as snow." His weary feet became as "polished brass." His raiment appeared as a pillar of cloud through which the richest moonbeams streamed. On his head were many crowns, and on his lips the "voice as of many waters" hung.

But the answer to Christ's prayer for the establishment of his disciples' faith did not stop here. "*Behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias.*"

It is difficult to repress a sigh at the mention of Moses. The last scene of his life is sure to flit before us. We see him assembling Israel's swarthy sons, and delivering to them his farewell charge. We see him taking his final leave of them, and with streaming eyes, blanched cheek, and throbbing heart, wending his way up Nebo. A strange, deep moan, as from some tempest-lashed ocean, goes after him. Again and again he pauses, as though the struggle was too much for him. Forty years has he roved the desert, why not rest in Canaan? The bones of Joseph were going up to the land of promise, why his to bleach on this lone mount? He dares not look behind. Upward he climbs, and at last the top of Pisgah is gained. There he stands for hours, gazing on the far-off beauties of Palestine. It was the home and burying-place of his fathers. There were the graves of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. There were Mamre and Bethel. Would that he could pass on and drink of that goodly stream Jordan! Would that he could sit beneath the shade of those olive-trees and rest! But no, he must die—die with the rocks for his pillow, the wailing of winds for his requiem, and the dew-drops of heaven the only tears shed upon his cold but placid brow. He died,

* Gilfillan.

and God buried him, but in our text he appears with Jesus in Canaan at last.

There was with him a no less illustrious character in the person of Elias. We never think of him without picturing one seated in a chariot of fire, thundering up the azure steep, and never resting till his burning wheels cleave celestial verdure. Both "*appeared in glory*"—no longer in the humble garb of our mortality, but with the winged pomp and dazzling beauty of the seraphim. The disciples, by some strange intuition, recognized them. And O if there was a solitary doubt still lingering in their minds respecting the Saviour, it must have been extinguished now, for they heard their venerable visitors distinctly "*speak of his decease which he should shortly accomplish at Jerusalem*." Now were they sure that the truth dwelt in him. Distrust him they could not any more. Joy-beams illumined their countenances, and a burst of enthusiasm thrilled their hearts. "Master," said Peter, "it is good for us to be here; and let us build three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias."

But the answer to Christ's prayer was not yet completed. Suddenly a strange white cloud, like that seen by the Israelites in the wilderness, hovered over Tabor. Down, down, like a mighty meteor, it came. The disciples trembled as it neared them. And no wonder; for the memory of their past suspicions was sufficient to excite fear of some signal punishment. Would not vengeance flash forth from the cloud and consume them? Was not a thunderbolt of wrath on the wing to destroy them? But their fears were needless. "There came a voice out of the cloud saying, This is my beloved Son: **HEAR HIM**;" and this said, both cloud and company disappeared. When the disciples recovered from their trepidation they found Jesus alone. The glory of the transfiguration had faded like those wandering night-fires

which sometimes illuminate for awhile our northern skies. Night wore on ; they slept little, but continued till the break of day talking of the glorious things revealed. “*And they kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen.*”

Dear brethren, are there no lessons to be learned on Tabor? See you not how tenderly Christ cares for his own disciples? O what love was there in our Lord’s offering this prayer at this crisis in the history of the twelve! But it was only the adding of another to the untold prayers which he had already offered for the establishment of their faith and the promotion of their salvation. Ah! “we have not a high-priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.” If the temptations to which we are exposed become too strong for us, “he will make a way for our escape.” He will pray for us, and arm us, as he armed his disciples, “with the shield of faith;” and “therewith we shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.”

Too often we distrust the Saviour’s love. Because he is apparently removed from us and we perceive him not, we suppose him to be ignorant of our wants, or at least to be so occupied with the guiding of his mighty empire as to be indifferent to them. Such a view, however, is derogatory to the character of Christ. Distance cannot diminish his affection, and multiplicity of objects produce no confusion with him. With consummate skill he works all things after the counsel of his own will; and though he occupies a palace and we dwell in dust, and though he holds the reins of eternity and we are full oft crushed by poverty and temptation, we may rest assured that he does not overlook us, but that his love for us is as deep, as constant, and as active as when he endured in our stead the unparalleled agonies of the garden and the tree. Let us then trust in

him, let us commit our souls to his keeping, relying upon his love, and believing that still, as in the past, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd ; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead them that are with young."

Again, discern you not on Tabor fresh proof of our immortality? Centuries had elapsed since Moses and Elias passed from earth, when they reappeared in glory on Tabor. During this interval mighty conquerors had perished and nations been blotted from existence. Still, untouched by the lapse of years and the shock of falling empires, these two men live. *And because they live, we shall live also.*

How inspiring is the doctrine of the soul's immortality! Scorn the Christian religion as men may ; hold it up to ridicule and shame ; accuse it of being the superstitious offspring of statesmanship and priestcraft ; chase it from their dwellings as they would a tainted leper ; after all, where else shall we go for consolation in the time of our deepest tribulation ? Immortality ! Nature may indeed faintly suggest it ; philosophy may venture, hesitatingly and tremulously, to hope it ; but Christianity alone can establish it. Immortality ! O how it dispels the dim shadows of the present, and decks with ascending sunbeams the endless ages of the future ! How it lifts the fainting spirit up when bowing before the blasts of bitter bereavement, and enables the believer to clap his hands, and even sing, amid the fury of the storm ! Immortality ! But take this hope from us and you launch us upon a wild, surging sea, without a chart or compass, night and the rocks around us, and not a solitary star to gaze down in mute pity on our doom ; you mantle every stage of our pilgrimage in more than Egyptian gloom, and leave death's closing hour a scene of blackness and despair ; you blight every blossom of promise, and turn into bitterness every well-spring of joy. Then

All hail the calm reality,
The seraph Immortality!
Welcome, welcome happy bowers,
Where no passing tempest lowers;
But the azure heavens display
The everlasting smile of day;
And the spirit sinks to ease,
Lulled by distant symphonies.

But again. Have we not on Tabor indubitable evidence of the recognition of Christian friends in heaven? Moses and Elias were made known to the disciples. We too shall know them, and all the pious dead, hereafter. This is part of our birthright, and will not be withheld any more than the other good things which God hath prepared for them that love him. Respecting the objections which have been urged against this glorious doctrine we have little to say, save that they are exceedingly puerile. "What! shall memory be obliterated, and shall we forget our own past histories, and accordingly cease to know that we have been redeemed men! or, remembering this fact, shall we be prevented from communicating our histories to others?"* Shall we be in the presence of friends with whom we have labored and prayed and suffered, and who have twined themselves around our affections as the acanthus-leaf around the Corinthian pillar? and yet shall we be prevented from knowing them through eternity? Are the apostles now ignorant of each other? Can we believe that Moses and Elias were unknown to each other prior to their advent on Tabor, and that having accomplished their mission they retired into forgetfulness of each other again? Surely not! Why, heaven is not to estrange us; heaven is our Father's home; it is the great gathering-house of his people.

* Macleod.

There are our loved ones in their rest—
They've crossed Time's river; now no more
They heed the bubbles on its breast,
Nor feel the storms that sweep its shore.
But their pure love can live, can last;
They look for us their home to share,
When we, in turn, away have passed.
What joyful greetings wait us there—
Across the river!

“O renowned day!” exclaimed the Roman orator; “when I shall have reached the divine assemblage of those minds with which I have congenial predilections, and shall escape this untoward and uncongenial throng!” “We but depart,” said the lyrist of the same nation, “to meet our *Æneas*, and our *Tully*, and our *Ancus*.” “I must confess,” said the pious Baxter, “as the experience of my own soul, that the expectation of meeting and loving my friends in heaven, principally kindles my love to them while on earth. If I thought I should never know them, and consequently never love them after this life is ended, I should number them with earthly things, and love them as such; but I now delightfully converse with my pious friends, in a firm persuasion that I shall converse with them forever, and I take comfort in those that are dead or absent, believing that I shall shortly meet them in heaven, and love them with a heavenly love.”

Brethren, let us be comforted in our bereavements. Many of us have dear ones who have crossed the dark river and now rest beneath the shade of the trees. Their departure has left our hearts lonely and desolate, and robbed life of its brightness for aye. *We shall meet them again.* Yes, on a shore where the ripple of sorrow shall never fall upon the ear, where farewells are unknown and joy is complete; in a land where the leaves are ever green and the flowers amaranthine; where the rills run purple with nectar and the dews drop fragrant with balm; where every av-

enue and walk is paved with burnished gold, and above all and on all flash the streaming splendors of Jehovah; there in the temple of God, the Eden of the universe, sweet paradise of delights, we shall meet them again. And how soon, who can tell? There is but a veil of gossamer between us and immortality—dark indeed, and impenetrable to human sight, yet withal so easily dissolved that with the next breath it may melt away.

Finally. From the glory of Christ, as seen on Tabor, we may learn something of our own future glory. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” *Like Jesus!* But who can compass such a thought? We may rise on the eagle-wings of fancy, and following the soarings of patriarchs and prophets, strive to scale the immeasurable heights which separate us from the Sun of our destiny, but it will only be to feel our pinions falter at length, and to be compelled to drop down to the mists and shadows of earth again. *Like Jesus!* “Now we know in part, but when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory.”

SERMON XV.

THE LOSS OF THE SOUL.

“For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” (Matt. xvi. 26.)

A MORE solemn question than this it were impossible to propound. It is moreover of universal application, addressing itself not to a solitary class, but to every individual member of our race. It claims attention of those who, rioting in sin and sunk in ignominy, forget that they have souls and are more than the mere tenants of the present; of those who, knowing themselves the heirs of immortality, and expecting an eternity of bliss, are yet strangely unmindful of the conditions on which that felicity is suspended, and are wholly absorbed in the pursuit of the vanities around them; of those too who, though the subjects of forgiven sin, a renewed heart, and a lively hope, are prone to underrate their privileges, and in an evil hour to barter for momentary pleasures the inestimable purchase of a Saviour’s blood. The question is adapted to startle the most careless, and to exert a salutary influence on all. Kept constantly before us, pondered thoughtfully and prayerfully, happiest results would follow. Earth would become an Eden; every energy enlisted on the side of godliness; our chief desire and aim the glory of God and the salvation of our souls.

My friends, in all earnestness and tenderness, I would press this question on your attention to-day. I feel deeply anxious for your eternal welfare. I would have you regard the salvation of the soul of permanent importance. I would have you willing to make any sacrifice to secure it;

ready to face any difficulty, to undergo any hardship, to bear any shame, to suffer any death, rather than miss heaven. God grant that when this question has been considered, and the inevitable and momentous conclusion reached, you may not be found unmoved, having your counterpart in Lot's sons-in-law in Sodom, to whom, in his solicitude, "he seemed as one that mocked;" or like Lot himself, undecided, loath to leave the substance he had accumulated, lingering regretfully amid the precincts of iniquity; or like his wife, who, fleet of foot at first, sped well toward the mount of safety, but soon, wearying, looked back on the deserted mansion, and for her unbelief and pride miserably perished. Rather may salvation appear to you of highest moment; and seeking pardon and renewal, may you, "by patient continuance in well-doing," obtain at last "eternal life."

In order that the question may have its proper weight, and be of the largest practical utility, let us consider first, what is implied in gaining the whole world; and secondly, what in losing the soul. Having dwelt on each particular, we shall be better able to contrast them, and be more deeply impressed therewith. Consider,

I. What is implied in gaining the whole world.

There is no necessity that by this we understand universal empire. It rather denotes the enjoyment of all the satisfaction which this world can afford a rational creature. Let us suppose a person to have thus gained the whole world. Every physical endowment is his. He is a stranger to deformity and disease. Few indeed are thus highly favored. Our sympathy is often touched by the spectacle of dwarfed limbs, sightless orbs, and speechless tongues. Troublesome days and wearisome nights are appointed unto many. In addition to exemption from physical ills, this man has all those outward advantages so commonly desired,

such as rank, affluence, and fame. We may consider him as occupying some exalted office, the highest in his country's gift. The smiles of the nation are showered on him. His name is trumpeted by every lip, heard alike in modest hovel and proudest hall. Heroic deeds are told of him; he has wrought deliverance for the people. Visit his home: all natural and artificial beauties are there; the skill of the architect has been tasked to plan and decorate the gorgeous edifice in which he lives; trees and shrubs from every clime have been brought to enrich the scene; flowers the rarest and loveliest shed their perfume on the ambient air; the landscape commands an unequaled combination of all that is sublime and picturesque in mountain, mead, and sea. Enter the magnificent abode: sculpture, with all its delicacy of outline and expression, is there; paintings, such as make canvas breathe, enchant the eye; melodies as soul-stirring and divine as ever fell from mortal lyre float upon the ear; here is found all that can minister to the satisfaction of the most cultivated taste. We must grant the individual we are describing every natural indulgence. He is an epicure, and fares sumptuously every day; far-distant lands yield to him their luxuries, and all the ingenuity of culinary art is put in requisition to gratify his palate. The most polished and refined society is his; the titled and honorable flock to his receptions, and gather at his festal-board; friends on whose attachment he can rely, whose joy it is to anticipate his slightest wish, and who would peril life itself in his behalf, surround him. Moreover, he is preëminently wise. There is more than outward splendor to attract attention and awaken admiration. Genius may be ascribed to him. He has a mind endowed with keenest insight, loftiest imagination, soundest judgment, and most untiring application. Wondrous are the acquisitions he has made: the lore of antiq-

uity has been mastered ; the circle of the sciences has been explored. He can discourse with interest and satisfaction on obscure questions of the past ; can harmonize the seeming discrepancy between the deductions of science and the utterances of inspired truth ; can estimate the distances of the stars, their magnitude and weight ; can unfold the properties of minerals and plants, and the various uses to which they may be applied ; can decide the most intricate points of law relating to the rights and privileges of individuals ; can show the equipoise which secures the harmony and the provisions which maintain the well-being of society ; can forecast the future with almost a prophet's ken, and from springs of action too latent to be observed by common minds predict the struggles and upheavals that will rock the earth, the course of empire, and the rise and fall of dynasties and nations. Men speed to him as to olden oracle. It is with him as with Job, who, recalling vanished prosperity, could say : "Unto me men gave ear, and waited, and kept silence at my counsel. After my words they spake not again ; and my speech dropped upon them. And they waited for me as for the rain ; and they opened their mouth wide as for the latter rain." There remain but one or two touches to complete the picture. We must suppose this man a stranger to an awakened conscience. Thoughts of judgment and retribution are unknown to him. No fabled Furies pursue him, grim and awful to look upon, clothed with black and blood-stained robes, and serpents wreathing around their heads instead of locks of hair. His days are calm and peaceful—a sail over a silver sea, with gentle zephyrs to waft him forward, and no omen of disaster to darken and depress his spirit. Allow him now the longest period of human life ; suppose the lengthening years to bring no wrinkle to his brow, nor halting to his step ; age to find him like the leader of Israel on Nebo,

“with his eye not dimmed, nor his natural force abated.” Here, then, is the man who has gained the whole world; here is he who has reaped all the enjoyment it is capable of yielding an intelligent being. A dazzling picture, truly! Look at it, ye lovers of the world, ye votaries of time. Here is one of your number who has reached the sun-lit summit to which you would attain. Here is one who has realized all the bliss for which adventurers have dug, and philosophers have pondered, and poets have sung, and warriors have bled. O the titles, the honors, the riches, the pleasures, the talents, the influence, that are his! *The whole world!* And yet, like the ancient Egyptians, who sobered the merriment of their feasts by the exposure of a human skull, I would repress desire by putting to you the question of the text: “What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” Consider,

II. What is implied in losing the soul.

We can depict to ourselves all that is implied in gaining the world; it is impossible, however, to more than faintly conceive what is involved in the loss of the soul. To lose the soul is to lose the world. Yes, that very world for which the soul’s salvation was neglected and despised is forfeited at death. With the surrender of the spirit expires its lease on all the enjoyments of time. “We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.” The hand that grasped the reins of empire must then relax its hold. The eye must dim that gazed in rapture on the varied charms of flood and field, and kindled proudly at the sight of lordly mansion and of fair domains. The ear grows dull and cold that drank in earth’s pleasant harmonies, childhood’s carol, the bird’s sweet matin, theplash of blooklets, and the lullaby of summer winds. O if there has been no preparation for heaven, if its gates of pearl flash not upon the eye, and

its sounds of melody steal not upon the ear, how terrible to bid adieu to time! A new scene bursts upon the disembodied spirit. Where here the sovereignty which Nimrod planned, which Alexander conquered, and which Cæsar essayed? Where here, indeed, the smallest pleasure for which mortals sigh? The canopy is cheered by no sun or moon or stars; the expanse reveals no verdant mount or smiling plain; proud cities loom not through the gloom; luxury and ease have here no seat; wealth and fame have here no praise. The soul awakes to find itself bereft of every joy—a homeless wanderer amid a wilderness of woe.

To lose the soul is not only to lose the world, but to lose heaven. Heaven is the acme of perfection. It is the royal residence of Deity; the place where he unveils his grandeur, and lavishes his goodness in fullest measure. Earthly images have been exhausted to set forth its blessedness. It is a kingdom, and as such it is immovable and enduring; its inhabitants are all kings and priests unto God; white robes are worn by them, indicative of their spotless purity, and palms are waved by them in token of their conquests and renown. It is a city, and as such its walls are of jasper, and its streets of transparent gold; it needeth not the light of the sun, for it is bathed and beautified by the more brilliant light of the Lamb; the nations of the saved walk in it; and it resounds with song and praise, the chorus of a great multitude, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder. It is a paradise, and as such it is redolent with sweetness and teeming with felicity; the Lord God walketh in it, and angels are more familiarly known than when they sung to unfallen man; the tree of life is here also, and so fruitful that it bears every month, so versatile that its produce is of twelve sorts, applicable to every want and taste; and so accessible that, instead of be-

ing protected by a flaming sword, it stands in the public streets. O the unspeakable felicity of heaven! O the grandeur and gladness and glory that immortally reign in that consecrated spot! Thought cannot compass it; tongue cannot celebrate it. There sin never enters; there sorrow is unknown; no shadows dim the sky; no night alternates with day. The river of bliss rolls on with ceaseless and unruffled flow. Joy never fades; life never dies. Ask yourselves then how great must be that loss which entails the loss of heaven. O to be excluded from its spotless joys; to see yawning between a great gulf, black and bottomless, which no bridge can ever span, and no wing can ever cross; to be imprisoned where the only sounds are those of agony, and the only sights those of misery; how terrible, how appalling! The loss of the soul, however, implies not only the loss of the world and the loss of heaven, but the infliction of extreme, positive misery. It is by no means agreeable to me to dwell on the horrors of hell. I shudder as I think of the awful doom shadowed forth by "the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is never quenched." Tell me not that these are mere earthly figures. God can no more make a false impression on the human mind, by the use of figures, than he can lead men into error by the plainest and most positive declarations; for both would be alike contrary to the divine veracity. O I tell you there is meaning in the burning pit and the ascending smoke, the fiery thirst and the gnawing pain, the wailing discord and the harsh dissonance of gnashing teeth! These images, I believe, but imperfectly convey the misery of the damned. The reality is beyond the power of man to conceive or understand. "Fear not them which kill the body," is the Saviour's significant utterance, "but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

The loss of the soul will be irreparable. The punishment of sin is expressly declared in Scripture to be eternal. Daniel tells us that the wicked shall rise “to shame and *everlasting contempt.*” Our Lord asserts that they “shall go away into *everlasting punishment,*” and Paul, that they shall be “punished with *everlasting* destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power.” The instrument of their punishment is spoken of as “*everlasting fire,*” and the destruction of the wicked is called “*eternal damnation.*”

You have now been directed to the two opposite pictures presented by the text. Gaze on them both; turn from one to the other; ponder them deeply, and now answer the question, “What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” One or two considerations may help you to answer this question. Consider that the gain of the world is but temporary—the loss of the soul eternal.

We may suppose a man to possess for long years all that this world is capable of yielding. We may grant him friendships, fond as love can twine them, pleasures choice as heart could covet, honors high above ambition, wealth whereat the world would wonder, and a home where meet all the joys man’s thought can image. But all these delights he must leave at death. Home, gold, friends, lands, equipage, all vanish with that stroke. He then enters on eternity. O how terrible, if an eternity of pain! What is he profited, though he has gained the whole world? Of what advantage the highest earthly bliss, though prolonged a thousand years, if succeeded by a night of never-ending woe? Suppose a ball of sand as large as the whole earth—suppose a grain of this to be annihilated every thousand years—which would be the better, to be happy while the ball was thus slowly wasting away, and miserable ever aft-

er? or to be miserable during the time it was consuming, and happy ever after? Would not a wise man prefer the latter, seeing that all the ages in which the ball was consuming would bear infinitely less proportion to eternity than a drop of water to the ocean, or a grain of sand to the whole earth?

Consider that the happiness derived from the gain of the world is imperfect—the misery entailed by the loss of the soul is complete. We may suppose a man to have reached the highest altitudes of human prosperity. We may suppose him to enjoy all the satisfaction which such unwonted prosperity can impart; yet without God, a knowledge of his favor, an assurance of his smile, though he may have no fear of future punishment, his happiness will be incomplete. Man's chief good can consist in nothing inferior. The soul that was stamped with the image of its Maker has boundless capacities, and will content itself with nothing less than the infinite and immortal. God is the source and fountain of its blessedness. Attempt to satisfy it with earthly enjoyments—it is to feed it with husks, and not with the living bread. O there is no real happiness for man but in union and intercourse with his Creator and Redeemer! This happiness is inward and abiding. It is superior to earthly disaster and distress. When health declines, when friends forsake, when the fig-tree no longer blossoms, when worldly resources are dried up, when death threatens, it remains to comfort and to bless. We say not that the man who has gained the whole world has no pleasures; but as compared with that of the Christian, it is as the flickering torch in the blaze of the noonday sun. This imperfect happiness of his gives place to completest miseries. The pains of a lost soul know no alleviation. There is no balm to mitigate the bitter cup. The penalty is always full and overflowing. No star glimmers in the firmament; no joy

relieves the everlasting gloom. What then is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? What advantageth it him to enjoy the highest human happiness, unworthy at the best, and lie down at last in hopeless, most intense anguish?

The question of the text is rendered still more impressive when we reflect that the gain of the world is practically impossible, while the loss of the soul, if the world be its chief object of pursuit, is inevitable. You must have observed that the gain of the world is simply a supposition. “What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world?” No one could ever boast of such possession. There have been individuals who have experienced many of this world’s pleasures—none who have enjoyed them all. “Naaman was a great man with his master, and honorable, because by him the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria; he was also a mighty man of valor; *but he was a leper.*” True picture of human life! The worm is at the root of the fairest gourd; and the tallest peaks are swept by the coldest blasts. How many kings have groaned under the burden of their crowns, and sunk down and died! How many have exchanged the monarchy for the monastery, and retired into privacy, there hoping to find a peace which their thrones denied them! You may seek the joys of the world, but few of them will you obtain; and in placing your happiness in their possession, you will assuredly lose your own soul. The point for you to decide then is, whether you will give time and thought and energy to the pursuit of the world, the gain of which is uncertain and limited and unsatisfying at most, and in the end lose your own soul; or whether you will dedicate yourselves unreservedly to God, holding the world light in comparison with obedience to his will, and in the end have everlasting life.

“How long halt ye between two opinions?” “Choose ye

this day whom ye will serve." O that I could hear you say, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Wise would be your decision. It might not seem so to many now, but it would so appear to all at the last day. O the reward that awaits every self-denying follower of Christ! "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it." Yes, if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him. If we take part in his reproach, we shall share his exaltation and triumph. Glance from time to eternity; look from earth to heaven. Here the gay and fashionable may despise you; there the blessed angels will greet you. Here carnal pleasures may go untasted; there highest spiritual raptures will refresh you. Here wealth and pomp may be sacrificed for righteousness; there an inheritance incorruptible shall be your portion. Here the taunt and the scorn may oft oppress you; there the voice of Jesus shall approve you, and you shall hear the ineffable "Well done!"

I have read of an Australian steamer that was wrecked in sight of her destined port. A number of adventurers were aboard, who had returned to their native land after long years of absence and toil amid distant mines. Anxious to save their fortunes, many of them fastened their gold about their waists and sprung into the waters, but were weighed down and drowned by the incubus. One man was observed to hold poised in his hand a belt of the precious metal. He looked at it regretfully; it was the result of brave years of labor and struggle and self-denial. He had hoped to purchase with it ease and competency in his native land. With one wild whirl, however, he flung it far out into the waves, then, leaping in, swam safely to shore. A wise man, truly! Better far to lose a fortune than to lose life; and better far to lose the world and life itself than to lose the soul.

O that none of us may ever forget the question propounded by the text! Amid our eventful history as a people, amid the stirring questions constantly rising and pressing on the mind for solution, amid the strife of opinion, the war of partisanship, and the clamor of excited passions, may we hear, high above all, loud as a thunder-peal, wakening the deep heavens, the solemn query, "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

SERMON XVI.

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

“Brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified.” (2 Thess. iii. 1.)

THE missionary zeal of St. Paul must deeply impress the thoughtful student of his life and labors. From the time of his conversion to the period of his death, the one consuming passion of his soul was the universal diffusion and acceptance of the gospel. It is astonishing what sufferings he endured in behalf of this object. “In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.” “But none of these things moved him, neither counted he his life dear unto himself, so that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.”

It is supposed that the apostle was at Corinth when he solicited the prayers of the Thessalonian converts. That proud, luxurious city, with its corrupt habits and debasing superstitions, presented many obstacles to the triumph of the truth. The apostle was bent on making it a stronghold for Christ. The truth, however, could not prevail unless accompanied by divine power. It was the secret energy which had been the cause of its success in the past. It was this which had startled the attention of the haughty Jew, quelled the prejudice of the intolerant Samaritan, and bowed with shame the idolatrous inhabitants of Galatia. It was this which had so recently given the gospel a foothold in Thessalonica, notwithstanding the specious arguments of error and the fierce onset of persecution. Hence

in writing to the Thessalonians, reverting to the source of past achievements and feeling the absolute need of divine assistance in his work at Corinth, the apostle urges them, among other duties, to remember him and his co-laborers at the throne of grace. “Brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you.”

The subject of discourse will be the Christian Ministry. First, the object which it proposes; secondly, the opposition which it encounters; and thirdly, one of its principal supports.

I. The object which it proposes.

You will perceive from the text that this object is two-fold—the universal spread and reception of the gospel. “That the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified.”

It should never be forgotten that the ministry is an institution of Christ. It is not the upgrowth of governmental policy nor an outflow of merely personal philanthropy. It is a wise and gracious agency set in motion by divine love, and quickened and perpetuated by divine power. Over eighteen centuries have elapsed since it received its commission to evangelize the world. With varying fortune, but with unquenchable resolve, it has clung to its great object through all these years. Its progress is confessedly slow. The reign of truth is far from universal. Still the ministry is not discouraged. It buoys itself up with the hope of final conquest. It lives and labors, believing that the world will yet be mantled with the beauties of holiness as with the dews of morning. Truth is mighty and shall prevail, for it comes “not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.” All human speculations fail, this abideth. “The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the

goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field; the grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand forever." Its divine origin and attendant evidence insure its triumph. Though opposed, persecuted, maligned, it will infallibly vindicate its illustrious birth and native greatness. It is a hammer, and in the course of time will break the rock in pieces. It is a leaven, and ere long it will permeate the entire mass of humanity. It is as a grain of mustard-seed, and is destined to become a plant of unrivaled stature and renown. Yes, "the word of the Lord shall have free course, and be glorified;" not only at home but abroad; not only among the refined, the scholarly, the astute, but among the ignorant, the superstitious, the profane. Darkness shall flee away; the fields shall whiten unto harvest; Jesus shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied. O the joy of those coming times! I ascend the watch-tower of revelation, and through the mist of the ages catch glimpses of the glory to be revealed. I see the will of God done on earth as it is in heaven; I see Jews and Gentiles together glorying in the cross; I see Africa converted to God; I see the isles of the sea ingathered to Christ; I see the domains of the False Prophet emancipated from their degradation; I see the temple of Buddha superseded by the temple of Jehovah; I see the snow and ice of the polar regions illuminated by the beams of the Sun of righteousness; and I hear the voice of a great multitude as a voice of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!"

You ask, Is this hope of the ministry warranted by Scripture? We believe it is. Did time permit, we might enumerate many passages which predict the ultimate triumph of the gospel; but we confine ourselves to a limited selection. Ponder the seventy-second Psalm. David, when near the close of life, predicts the grandeur and prosperity

which should mark the reign of his son. It is easy to perceive from the terms employed that he refers not simply to Solomon, but to that greater Son who in later times should sit upon the throne of David his father. The horizon of his vision widens as he climbs the hill of prophecy, until the kingdom of Israel is but a solitary province in the far-reaching empire which stretches beneath him.

The dominion of Messiah extends from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. At his feet the dwellers in the wilderness, the inhabitants of the isles, the occupants of thrones, bow in humble and grateful submission. Yea, all kings fall down before him, all nations serve him. The establishment of his kingdom, it is intimated, will be gradual. From original insignificance and obscurity, it attains to universal ascendancy and power. The symbol under which its progress is portrayed is, "a handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains." In human estimation nothing could be more improbable than its growth. Planted in this unkindly soil—the bleak summits of pride and worldliness, ingratitude and rebellion, it nevertheless takes root, and miraculously sustained, propagates itself until, covering every slope with its fruit, it waves in the wind and shakes like the cedars of Lebanon. This kingdom is declared to be indestructible. It will continue so long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations. Its crowning glory will be the universal blessedness it finally diffuses. Its supremacy is marked not by violence and blood, but by righteousness and peace. The scepter of its King is wielded in behalf of the poor, the needy, and him that hath no helper. "Men are blessed in him; all nations call him blessed."

Turn now to the second chapter of the Book of Daniel. It records the forgotten dream of the Babylonish despot and its interpretation by the seer. The image, great and terri-

ble, uniting in itself the strength and splendor of successive monarchies, stands as a whole, the embodiment of evil. What shall overthrow the grim, defiant form? In the distance a small, rough, unpolished stone appears. But for the mysteriousness of its origin—"cut out of a mountain without hands"—we should turn away from it in contempt. This is Christianity. And lo, as we look on it, it moves! No natural force impels it; it has in itself a hidden life. Its course is toward the insulting image. On, on it speeds, gathering fresh momentum from every revolution, till with resistless stroke it smites the colossal shape. "Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floor; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them." A complete destruction! The image was not only shivered to pieces but its very fragments were borne away by the winds of heaven. And now the stone, at first so small and unpretending, became a great mountain, "and fills the whole earth." Evil vanishes from the scene, and in its stead is *good*, majestic, worldwide, and enduring.

Study the Epistle to the Romans. The unchurching of the Jewish nation is there explained and vindicated by the apostle. It was in punishment of their pride and unbelief; but their rejection is not final; "God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew." "Blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved." It is clear that a day approaches when the Jews will confess Jesus to be the promised Messiah, which confession will be followed by mighty efforts on their part to evangelize the world. Hence the queries: "Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fullness?" "For if the casting

away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead?"

Who then will dare aver that the object which the ministry proposes is unwarranted by Scripture? My brethren, we are engaged in no uncertain warfare. We fight not as one who beateth the air. Every stroke tells. Slowly may we advance to universal empire, nevertheless it awaits us. Immanuel shall reign. The cross shall triumph. The word of truth shall prevail. "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together."

We now turn from the object which the ministry proposes, to consider,

II. The opposition which it encounters.

That such opposition exists may be inferred from the request, "Brethren, pray for us;" as also from the sequence anticipated, "that the word of the Lord may have free free course, and be glorified."

When we remember the natural depravity of man, his aversion to holiness, his inclination to evil, we are not surprised that the promulgation of a system like the gospel, so pure, so heavenly, should awaken opposition. The annals of the past but reveal the deep-seated dislike of mankind to the reign of righteousness and truth, and their sanguinary efforts to thwart the few who would promote it.

Look at the opposition which the ministry encountered in earliest times. It is difficult now to estimate the strength which was then arrayed against it. We must transport ourselves in thought to days when Roman emperors were deified; when Greek and Jewish demagogues fierce with prejudice were rife; and when the dreams of Homer and the traditions of the elders molded the morals of the people. The gospel was no sooner proclaimed than every thing rose up to oppose it. The leaders of thought denounced it. Its doctrine of the cross was stigmatized as

foolishness; it was too humbling to self, too mortifying to human pride. The habits of the multitude were at war with it; unlike other systems, it pandered to no sinful proclivity, it condemned evil tempers, impure thoughts, and vain imaginations. False worships took counsel against it; it must be suppressed, as it threatened to undermine belief in the authority of priesthoods, the sanctity of shrines, and the entity of the gods. National feeling was averse to it; it was too cosmopolitan in its character to be readily embraced by the contracted sympathies of the times. The civil sword was unsheathed against it; it was thought to be an enemy to the State, the fomenter of strife and discord. Before the gospel could surmount the opposition of early times, the track of its triumph was red with the blood of saints. O the host of witnesses "who were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held!" We think of them to-day—Polycarp, of Smyrna; Ignatius, of Antioch; the martyrs of Lyons and Vienna, and millions more whose names have been long forgotten.

Look at the opposition which the ministry encountered from the papacy. That intolerant and wide-spread corruption would have buried the truth in oblivion and flung a pall of darkness over the hopes of man. And how terribly did it wrestle for the mastery! We think of the Waldenses, driven from their peaceful valleys to perish among mountain snows. We think of Smithfield and its fires; of St. Bartholomew's night of blood. We think of Huss and Jerome, of Prague; of Ridley, and Latimer, and Cranmer, and the thousands of others whose lives were sacrificed on the altar of bigotry and cruelty.

Look at the opposition which the ministry encounters at present. We still have our foes, both at home and abroad. There is paganism, like a stagnant sea unruffled by a healthful breeze, sending forth its poisonous va-

pors and making the most glorious portion of the globe one vast moral charnel-house. There is Mohammedanism, like the simoom of its own native desert, darkening the center of the old world, proudly careering up and down its domain, and showering its blinding, blasting errors on the minds and hearts of millions. There is Romanism, strong in its seeming weakness, applying every restorative to regain its lost vigor and win back the throne of its ancient empire; lulling to slumber its opponents by peaceful assurances while secretly concocting the means of their overthrow, under hues as harmless as those of the chameleon, preparing to strike with the venom of the viper. There is infidelity, a floating iceberg which the sun of centuries has not thawed, looming up now in meretricious splendor, but chilling every wave and current of upward thought and noble impulse which may come within the scope of its influence. There is indifference, the hardened thoroughfare of parabolic painting, not absolutely rejecting the seeds of divine truth, but refusing them a place in the understanding and affections, careless whether they be abstracted by the hovering birds of evil or buried and crushed by the thronging feet of vanity. There is formalism, content with a punctilious observance of the rites and ceremonies, probing never to the heart's deep core and discovering its hidden wants; in Church-fellowship finding an anodyne for occasional fear, and with Heaven's wrath lowering upon it, singing softly to itself of peace and safety. And there is lukewarmness, professing attachment to Christ but sacrificing his truth to the circumstances of the hour; compromising principle for the sake of worldly expediency, and attempting the vain experiment of serving both God and mammon.

Such, my brethren, are some of the foes with which the ministry has to contend at the present hour. From the opposition which it encounters we proceed to consider,

III. One of its principal supports—the prayers of the Church. “Brethren, pray for us.”

It is common for skeptics to ascribe the early triumphs of Christianity to causes independent of divine agency. Christianity is represented as one of those rival systems which have originated in the East, and have been borne forward to success by a wave of popular enthusiasm. The fact is altogether ignored that there exists a marked difference between Christianity and all other systems of religious belief, as to its nature and the manner of its propagation. Christianity is the embodiment of purity and love; other systems are supremely sensual and selfish. Christianity propagates itself by simple self-assertion, sustained, as it claims, by the secret but mighty power of the Holy Ghost. Other systems propagate themselves through the influence of the sword, sinful congeniality, or superstitious fear. No analogy can legitimately be drawn between the success of Christianity and that of surrounding systems. It is in vain to point to the spread of Buddhism. That was but the natural development of a dreamy imagination, seeking to harmonize dim traditions with observed facts and native idiosyncrasies, and was in fullest sympathy with the thoughts, opinions, prejudices, inclinations, and interests of the people among whom it spread. Much the same may be said of the religion of Mohammed. With its convenient laxity and its paradise of sensual delights, it appealed most powerfully to the depraved taste of the Arab race, and the use of the scimiter by its votaries is sufficient to explain its triumphs over adjacent nations. If is a significant fact, however, that while neither Buddhism nor Mohammedanism, unaided by worldly power, has made any important inroad on Christian countries, Christianity wielding only “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,” and at war with the enthroned corruptions of centuries, has

been and is still prosecuting its conquests in every quarter of the globe.

To-day, as of old, the ministry stands before you expecting to succeed in its grand purpose, not by inflaming human passions nor by coercing the human will, but by the direct agency of God. We toil on with hope in our hearts, exclaiming with the apostle, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God!" Like him, over every fresh victory we raise the paeon, "Now thanks be unto God which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place." We have his promise, and on it we rely: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Our challenge is, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Divine assistance! Give us that, and sooner or later we shall triumph; let it be withheld, and we candidly confess to you that we must fail. Without Heaven's blessing, the most ingenious plans are foolishness, the most striking eloquence is driveling, the most gigantic efforts are powerless, the strongest alliance as impotent as infancy. It is not truth alone, not truth as advocated by lips of tenderness or learning, not truth as clothed with worldly pomp and power, but truth as attended by the quickening influence of the Spirit, that shall subjugate the world. "The weapons of our warfare are mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, as the Lord gave to every one?" "So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." Divine assistance, however, is intimately connected with prayer. The largest communications are bestowed only to the cry of earnestness and faith. See then one of our principal supports—the prayers of the Church. O brethren, you can "pray for us,

that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified." As auxiliary to our faith and labor, it is our right and privilege to expect your cheerful and zealous co-operation. It is God's plan to afford opportunities to all, even the weakest of his servants, to aid in promoting the triumph of his word. All may not be called to the office of the ministry, but all can unite to give that office efficiency and might. Did you ever think of this, my brethren? Perhaps you have sometimes sighed that you were not summoned to be a watchman to the house of Israel. You have imagined to yourself what good you could have wrought had the office and opportunity been granted you. As it is you see but little to do, and often you sit and wonder for what purpose you are detained in this evil world. Ah! my brother, there is no telling how much good you may accomplish through the simple medium of prayer. That closet of yours may be converted into a Carmel, from whose calm sky shall descend the living flame upon the altars of the tribes of Israel. You have read, no doubt, of "the great awakening" which followed Jonathan Edwards's sermon on the text, "Their feet shall slide in due time." When the preacher entered the pulpit he thought he had never seen so listless a congregation; but before he had been preaching long every eye was riveted, the Spirit of God began to move mightily upon the hearts of the people, insomuch that many sprung to their feet and clutched the pillars of the edifice, fearing that they were even then sliding into the pit. What was the secret of this amazing power? We are told that a short time before a number of pious persons had met and implored a special blessing on that service. I remember a church in which ministers loved to preach in preference to any church in that city—they seemed to enjoy more liberty, more unction, more power; and one of them, accounting for the difference

in his feelings there, attributed it to the prayers of the members, many of whom met at sunrise every Sabbath and spent an hour together in earnest prayer for the success of the gospel that day.

“Brethren, pray for us.” We need more grace to make full proof of our ministry at home. Sometimes we are strangely wanting in faith, and hence a corresponding lack of efficiency in our pulpit ministrations. We take up the sword of the Spirit and brandish it in the face of the foe, but we suddenly lose confidence in its power and strike with unsteady hand. We know what execution it has wrought in the past—how it smote the idols of Greece and Rome, how it cut its way through centuries of bloody opposition; and yet such is the cowardice of our hearts we fear to trust wholly to it again. We are like the disciples on the storm-tossed Sea of Galilee. The Strength of Israel is with us, we have had multiplied evidence of his power, and yet we grow timid and afraid when in the darkness of night we hear the roar of the elements around us. “Pray for us, that utterance may be given unto us, that we may open our mouths boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel.”

But we have need of your prayers, not only for our success at home, but also for our success abroad. Our aim is to evangelize the world. We are resolved to rest not until Christ has, not merely in promise but in fact, “the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession.” But how is our faith tried! How many are our discouragements! Often we think ourselves on the eve of a wonderful triumph, when lo! some cruel edict is passed, or some desolating war is declared, and the deep thunder-cloud comes over our summer sky. Or perhaps in the midst of victory our most intrepid leader falls, and we look around us in vain for one competent to supply his place. “Brethren, pray for us,” that undismayed by seem-

ing disaster we may go on with the battle, and possess the gates of our enemies.

“That the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified.” O was nobler, grander object ever set before a brotherhood of men? It is the subjugation of the world to Christ, it is its emancipation from the scepter of hell, and its restoration to the order, the holiness, and the happiness of heaven.

Hail the ‘day when angel voices shall say, “It is done!” Brethren, shall we not hasten this day of days? Shall we let selfishness or indolence keep us from participating in the holy warfare which is to end in such signal and universal triumph? O for more self-denial!

When Alexander was about to start on his career of Eastern conquest he distributed among his friends nearly all his personal effects, and on being asked what he had reserved for himself replied, “*My hopes!*” Shall one be willing to relinquish so much and to enter upon a career so fraught with peril and uncertainty, attracted by the mere blaze of an evanescent glory? and shall not we, my brethren, ministers and laity, “crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts,” and by earnest prayer and effort assist in the consummation of a triumph the grandest in the universe, and as certain as the truth of God, and for fidelity in which we shall be exalted to heavenly thrones, invested with enduring honors, and blessed with unspeakable delights?

SERMON XVII.

THE CITIES OF REFUGE.

“The Lord also spake unto Joshua, saying, Speak to the children of Israel, saying, Appoint out for you cities of refuge, whereof I spake unto you by the hand of Moses.” (Josh. xx. 1, 2.)

SIX of the cities of Israel were cities of refuge. These cities were not only a valuable provision of the civil government of the Israelites, but an important type of the redemption of the world by Christ. As such they assisted no doubt to sustain the faith and to quicken the hope of the ancient saints. It is true, the realities they prefigured could have been but dimly apprehended; but to travelers walking in darkness, and longing for the dawn, even starlight is sweet. To us who bask in the bright rays of the Sun of righteousness the significance of this and similar types is more clearly seen; and while no longer “shadows of good things to come,” they are still of service as striking illustrations, giving point and interest to the great truths of the gospel, and furnishing, moreover, a class of fulfilled prophecies which show conclusively the unity of the Old and New Testament Scriptures, and the divine origin of both.

That we do not err in regarding the cities of refuge as typical of “the salvation which is in Christ Jesus” is evident from one or more allusions to be found in the writings of St. Paul; but will be more obvious, perhaps, when we shall have traced the resemblance which we think we can see between these cities and some of the features of our redemption.

1. *Observe, first, these cities were decided on before they were designed for actual use.*

“The Lord also spake unto Joshua, saying, speak to the children of Israel, saying, Appoint out for you cities of refuge, whereof I spake unto you by the hand of Moses.” It was some time before, while the Israelites were still in the wilderness, when they “wandered in a solitary way, and found no city to dwell in,” that the command was given to Moses respecting the cities of refuge. A Saviour for our race was also determined on before the situation was such as to render his service possible. Our redemption was not an after-thought with God. It was arranged and provided for before man was brought into existence. Geologists delight to tell us of the antiquity of our globe; they speak of the countless cycles which must have elapsed since the ponderous mass was summoned into being. But old as may be our planet, dateless as may be its calendar since its appearance was greeted with the songs and shouts of the sons of God, the scheme of redemption is older still; for Christ, according to St. Peter, “verily was preordained *before* the foundation of the world.” Should it not invest Jehovah with infinite attractiveness, should it not bind us to him in the most inviolable love to know that we were in his thoughts and plans, in his affections and desires, ages before the progenitors of our race drew breath, or our orb was called out of nothingness to assume its place in the bright sisterhood of stars? Indeed, there never was a period when our salvation was absent from the heart of God. St. Paul styles our redemption “the eternal purpose which he hath purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.” “I have loved thee,” he himself declares, “with an everlasting love.” How great then must be the sin of those who have no appreciation of that love which has been flowing forth to them from the fountain of eternity! How sore will be

their punishment if they refuse to avail themselves of the refuge to be found in Christ—a refuge which was predetermined before a seraph sung, or a world sparkled in immensity! O sinner, beware! If the goodness of God is insufficient to prompt you to seek the Saviour, let the awful consequences which must follow the thwarting, in your case, of his “eternal purpose” deter you from such indifference.

2. Observe, secondly, these cities were appointed for the safety of those who had accidentally become exposed to the penalty of death.

In early times, when one person was killed by another, whether intentionally or not, it was considered the duty of the nearest kinsman of the deceased to avenge his death by slaying the murderer. This method of maintaining the sanctity of human life was open to objection; an individual might be punished for a result which was entirely beyond his control. A merciful provision was therefore introduced into the civil polity of the Israelites by which protection was offered to those who had inadvertently deprived another of life. There were sanctuaries to which they might flee, and where, when their case had been heard and their innocence proved, they would be safe from the avenger of blood. The individuals for whom these cities were intended have their counterpart in those for whom Christ was given. Our condition as fallen creatures, exposed to the penalty of a violated law, is, as it were, the result of accident. We had no share in the sin of our first parents; yet, in consequence of their crime, we come into the world with depraved appetites and an unsanctified will, and find ourselves liable to everlasting punishment. For us, however, a Saviour has been provided—a city of refuge. To him we can flee, and obtain security for time and for eternity. It was in view of this fact that God permitted our existence. Never would he have allowed the world to be peopled with

the posterity of Adam, had he not contrived the means of their salvation. Says St. Paul: "For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope." We ought not therefore to complain of God, because of our corrupt nature and liability to eternal death. "As by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." No man will suffer any loss or injury, ultimately, by the sin of Adam, but by his own willful obstinacy. God will more than compensate us for our present trials, if we obey him and avail ourselves of the refuge which he has provided. Says the apostle: "For I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us." It is by the gift of his Son—of which our fall was the occasion—that God designs holding in perpetual and loving fealty the un fallen myriads of his creation. The unparalleled love exhibited in that gift is to be the gravitating principle of the moral universe. "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell; and having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself, by him I say, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven." The key-stone occupies the highest and most conspicuous place in the arch. So Christ "is before all things, and by him all things consist." The Church is represented as "one body, of which Christ is the head." Believers, acquiescing in their present lot, bearing patiently its evils, have a "fellowship" with those sufferings which secure the stability of angels as well as their own salvation. Suffering with Christ, they shall also reign with him. Says St. Paul: "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all

things after the counsel of his own will; that we should be the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ." He says again: "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Child of Adam, why repine at present ills? O the sublime destiny which will be yours if obedient "to the high calling of God in Christ Jesus!" It transcends that of the angels who worship before the throne. It is a portion to which Eden, had it been kept, would have been but a tiny drop in comparison with the boundless deep.

3. Observe, thirdly, these cities were so distributed as to be easily accessible from any point in the land.

Three of them were on the east side of the Jordan, three of them were on the west. Less than a day's journey would, in most cases, bring the man-slayer to one of these cities. It was required that the roads leading to them should be kept in repair, and every facility was to be afforded to the fugitive in his endeavor to avail himself of their protection. See we not a correspondence between the number and nearness of these cities and the accessibility of Jesus Christ? Where is the spot in this world that Christ may not be found by the guilty or inquiring sinner? In what circumstances can we be placed that he will not be at hand as "our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble?" "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth." The Hindoo has rejoiced in him by the banks of the Ganges, and the Polynesian has sung of him in his tropic isle; the Hottentot has learned to love him in his simple way, and the Indian has wept for joy to find himself secure in the Redeemer; he has been found on the battle-field, in the surging tempest strewing

the shore with its wrecks, in the mine where no sunbeam penetrates, in the dungeon, in the hovels of the poor, in the heart of crowded cities, in the desert, on the lonely mountain-tops, and even amid polar snows. “The righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is to bring Christ down from above); or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”

4. Observe, fourthly, these cities, when entered, gave instant security to the fugitives.

Until within their gates, his life was in constant jeopardy. Should the avenger of blood overtake him before he had reached one of these places of refuge, he might be slain with impunity; but the moment he reached the city of refuge he was safe. The sword of the avenger must be sheathed. The elders of the city were bound to intervene, and to see that no violence was done to the man who had unwittingly slain his neighbor. Analogous to this is the security of the sinner on making application to Christ. The moment we believe on him, that moment we are saved; the moment we commit ourselves unreservedly to his mercy, that moment he interposes to deliver us from our fears. The law of God may threaten us with its dreadful penalty, its glittering sword may be flashing on our track, its proximity may be almost felt as we flee for shelter, but the instant we take hold of Christ as our personal Saviour, our adversary pauses, and we are no longer pursued. With such security as was to be found in these cities of refuge, how foolish would it have been, in one who needed and could claim

their protection, to be slow in starting, or to loiter on the way! No doubt there were those who did so. They were confident of their superior fleetness, and would not exert themselves till the avenger was in sight; or, thinking the avenger had not begun the pursuit, they reclined for awhile by some grassy fountain that bubbled by the way. We can imagine some to have fallen victims to their imprudence. The avenger was upon them before they were aware. Springing up, they sped over the plain, alarm adding wings to their feet. But it was too late; with a fierce gleam in his eye, and a step that seemed tireless, the avenger of blood gained on them each moment. See, the city appears! there are its welcome gates! O that the fugitive could but reach their shelter! But he pants for breath, his pace slackens, he stumbles, he falls! He is up again, but the avenger is on him, and the next instant his blood crimsoms the white sand. Does not this depict the fate of many of the unconverted? They admit their danger, and declare their determination to avail themselves of the salvation which is in Christ. But they imagine their probation to be long—that death is yet a great way off, and will come slowly, and that when they descry him there will be time enough to make application to Christ; or some sparkling fountain of earthly pleasure beguiles them, and they sit down to quaff of its nectar and listen to its music, thinking they will leave it by and by and set out in good earnest for the refuge there is in Christ. But, oblivious to the flight of time, they linger on until, to their surprise and horror, the last enemy appears. With a cry of agony and self-reproach they start from their recumbency, and haste to the refuge they have hitherto neglected; but while one now and then, like the dying thief, may reach the gates and gain admission, the vast majority are so confused by their extreme peril that they go wildly and unsteadily to

Christ, and before they can come to him aright—before they can appropriate his merits—death overtakes them and consigns them to their doom.

5. *Observe, finally, these cities gave permanent safety to the refugee only on condition of his remaining within until the death of the high-priest.*

Should he wander without the walls before the specified time had expired, the avenger of blood, finding him, might lawfully take his life. We may suppose there would be times when he would feel a desire to pass without the gates, and enjoy the freedom and beauty of the rural walks beyond. And there would be times when his heart would turn homeward, and he would long for the pleasures in which he had participated in other days. But it was at his peril that he ventured beyond the city; at an unexpected moment the avenger might reappear, and his blood be the sad penalty of his temerity. His wisest course was to deny self, and abide within his place of refuge. The continued safety of believers also depends on their abiding in Christ. It is at the risk of eternal wrath that they forsake the Saviour and trust themselves beyond the limits of his covenant. Says Christ, “Abide in me, and I in you.” Says St. Paul: “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.” It is lamentable, alas! how many, forgetting their dependence on Christ, have renounced him to their own destruction. Drawn away by some craving appetite, or seduced by some glittering prospect, they have left their stronghold and been overtaken by Divine vengeance ere they could regain it. We think of Solomon; we think of

Judas; we think of Ananias and Sapphira. Others have only narrowly escaped. David, Jonah, Peter—death on his pale horse, and hell following, were but a few steps behind them, as with fleet foot they sped back to the city of their refuge. Not until the death of the high-priest could the refugees return to their own homes. Various spiritual interpretations have been given to this circumstance. My own view is, that as our own High-priest “hath an unchangeable priesthood”—being “made not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life,” so while that life lasts, which will be eternally, we are to abide in him. So long as “it is witnessed that he liveth,” nothing is “to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” It is true our steadfastness will be assured in heaven. No avenger will lurk without the precincts of that holy city. Still, we shall always be dependent on Christ. Is there light in heaven? “The Lamb is the light thereof.” Is there song in heaven? It is of “the Lamb that was slain.” Is there bliss in heaven? “The river, clear as crystal, proceedeth out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.” Is there increasing satisfaction in heaven? “The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water.”

One question in conclusion: Are we in Christ? Have we availed ourselves of the refuge to be found in him? O sinner out of Christ, you are in awful danger. What! merry and careless, when perhaps you have only to listen, to put your ear to the ground, to catch the nearing tramp of the angel of death! Up! yonder, with its gates wide open, is the sanctuary where the avenger is powerless. Speed to it! Get within the shelter of its protecting walls.

Blessed be God, “there is no condemnation to them

which are in Christ Jesus." The covenant is confined not only to "the vow," but by the "oath" of Jehovah—"that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."

SERMON XVIII.

THE INCOMPARABLE TEACHER.

“Never man spake like this man.” (John vii. 46.)

SUCH was the tribute which the teaching of Christ evoked from the officers who on one occasion were sent to arrest him. So powerful was the impression made upon them by his utterances that, awed at first into silence, and then moved to admiration, they refused to molest him, and returned to their superiors, excusing their disobedience by frankly affirming his wonderful and incontestable preëminence. However much their opinion was scorned by the authorities who sent them, the officers were right in their estimate of the Saviour. He was indeed an incomparable teacher. Through all the ages the world has never seen his equal. All others, however brilliant, however much revered, are to him as transient tapers in the blaze of the noonday sun. Indeed, as the Son of God he stands to others in the relation of the ocean to the rivers, whose waters, however wide and deep, may be traced back, through snow and rain, and cloud and wind, to the bosom of the great ocean itself. All truth, physical as well as moral and religious, by whomsoever discovered and announced, has its origin in him.

What were the characteristics of our Lord's teaching?

I. Originality.

This of course we might expect from one who was divine as well as human. His originality consists not so much in the communication of what was absolutely new as in the unfolding of what had been already given, but so vaguely as to have been only dimly apprehended, and that by comparatively few. The central idea of his teaching was the near advent of a universal spiritual kingdom, of which he

was to be the founder and ever-living and supreme head. In his Sermon on the Mount he delineates the character, work, and blessedness of the subjects of this kingdom. In a series of parables he depicts its progress in the world, encountering opposition but awakening interest and inspiring love; gradually enlarging the area of its conquests until at last, from a state of obscurity and insignificance, it attains to vast proportions and unexampled power. The means by which his kingdom should be established is frequently declared. Its foundation must be laid in blood—not the blood of its adversaries, but of its King. His death, followed as it would be by his resurrection and ascension, would win for him the moral right to inaugurate such a kingdom, and give to him the necessary equipment for conducting it to a successful consummation. The terms of citizenship in this kingdom are simple, but comprehensive and unvarying. There must be a renunciation of what is displeasing to Christ; there must be an acceptance of him as the only hope and safety of sinners; there must be an open avowal of attachment to his cause; there must be an implicit and cheerful obedience to his commands. It is admitted that the announcement of the advent of such a kingdom was not altogether new. A few months before the Baptist had proclaimed it to the eager multitudes who flocked to hear him in the wilderness. Daniel had predicted it, and other prophets who lived centuries before the birth of Christ. But declare a fact is one thing, to understand and to be able to explain it is quite another. With the Baptist and the ancient prophets the coming kingdom was little more than a name; to Christ it was a truth fully grasped in all its relations and significance. They had the hieroglyphics, but the strange characters perplexed them. Christ alone could decipher them and read out their hidden meanings. They had the beams and rafters, the marble and precious

stones, but Christ alone possessed the draught, and knew how to fix them into the majestic temple. Their knowledge would have been of no practical service but for the light which he shed upon it. It would have been like a valuable medicinal plant blooming at our door, but with its properties unknown. It would have been like steam, and electricity, and other forces of nature, before modern science discovered and applied their unsuspected powers. That the kingdom of Christ had long before been predicted is, after all, no impeachment of his originality. Christ was in the world prior to his manifestation in the flesh. It was the Spirit of Christ who spoke in the ancient seers. Their delineations were not the deductions of their own reason, nor the pencilings of their own fancy, but the inspired disclosures of his unerring prescience. They were but so many successive stars heralding "the day-spring from on high." Like the summits of lofty mountains, they were gilded with a light which emanated from a sun as yet unrisen on the plains, but climbing upward to the horizon "in the greatness of his strength." They simply bore "witness of the light." Far from shining independently of Christ, they recognized their dependence, and made his character and work the object of their study. "Of which salvation," says St. Peter, "the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you; searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow."

The originality of Christ is intimately connected with his claims to Godhead. Infidels have perceived this, and the most ingenious and persistent efforts have been made to discredit his originality. It is pretended that he was a disciple of Hillel, the famous Jewish rabbi. Others would

trace a resemblance between his doctrines and those of the philosophers of Athens and Alexandria, and of the sages of the East. The results of the investigation of the most impartial criticism show that he was indebted to no such sources for his wisdom. His early life was passed in the isolation and seclusion of a humble village. Up to the commencement of his ministry he was engaged in manual toil. The contemptuous question of those who knew him was, "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?" He had no opportunity for the acquirement of a thorough and polished education. The further question of those who were familiar with him was, "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" His intercourse with the rabbis was only for a few days when he was taken, a child of twelve years old, to one of the feasts of Jerusalem.

It is worthy of note that "of all the Jewish sects then in vogue, none ever claimed Jesus as representing it, none ever branded him with the reproach of apostasy from its tenets." The leaders of Jewish thought were at variance with his teaching from the start. His pure spiritual conceptions seem never to have found a place in their hearts. They were exotics which would not bear to be transplanted to such cold, impervious soil. With Greek and Oriental scholars Christ had no association. He was only once beyond the borders of Palestine, and that was when an infant. His doctrines too had little in common with the ideas current in the Gentile world. If to the Jew his teaching was a "stumbling-block," to the Greek it was foolishness. Ages have since demonstrated the unparalleled wisdom of his teaching. "Whence, then, hath this man this wisdom?" is still our challenge to the infidel. The only rational answer is that which assigns it to the fountain of his Godhead.

II. A second characteristic of our Lord's teaching was authority.

This feature was conspicuous from the first. It was noticed that he “taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes.” The scribes reasoned, explained, appealed to Scripture and tradition, and based their conclusions upon a long array of arguments. He spoke as though he knew the truth intuitively, and had but to announce it to be entitled to belief. Absoluteness, positiveness, imperativeness, are manifest in his voice and style and manner. He never doubts the accuracy of his statements. He deals not in conjectures but affirmations. The assent of his hearers is not invited but demanded. As though superior to all human legislators—not excepting Moses, who was inspired—he dares to revise, amend, expand laws which were received and reverenced as from God. His language is: “It hath been said by them of old time; but *I* say unto you,” as though possessing an indefeasible right to the services of men. He selects his twelve apostles, and says to them, “Follow me.” To those who refuse to hearken to his words he threatens the most fearful punishment—“He that believeth not shall be damned.” He does at times attribute his authority to his Divine Father, but always in such terms as to imply a mysterious and essential oneness between himself and that Father. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself but what he seeth the Father do; for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.” “As my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. And he that hath sent me is with me.” “Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself; but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.” To many his doctrine, so lofty yet so reasonable, was in itself a sufficient indication of his authority. In the midst of one of his discourses, it is said, “As he spake these words many believed on him.” It was

thus with the Samaritans, in whose village he abode two days. To the woman who had introduced them to him they said: "Now we believe, not because of thy saying; for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." His authority, however, was supported by external evidence. He wrought the most stupendous miracles. He healed the leper, gave sight to the blind, and speech to the dumb. He calmed the winds, walked on the waves, cast out devils, and raised the dead. To those whom his doctrine failed to convince he presented his miracles. "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not." To impartial minds such an appeal was irresistible. "There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; the same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." "Many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?"

The authority assumed and exercised by our Lord in his office as teacher should be weighed by those who dispute his supreme Godhead. There are some who, while denying the divinity of Christ, would hold him up to our admiration as the ideal man, the only perfect flower of humanity. But if he is not God, his assumption of authority—so wide so absolute, so imperious, convicts him of a pride, an arrogance, of a self-seeking totally unbecoming the relations and obligations of a creature. Under the circumstances it is only as he is truly God that he can be perfect man. If he is less than divine, instead of meriting our admiration he deserves our indignant scorn.

III. A third characteristic of our Lord's teaching was simplicity.

Though authoritative he was never pedantic, nor artificial, nor affected. He had frequently to treat of subjects the most profound and mysterious, but he always endeavored to make them as plain and lucid as the capacities and circumstances of his hearers would permit. The language he employed was such as could be readily understood. There was no pompous oratory, no straining after rhetorical effect. He was perfectly easy, self-possessed, and natural. His discourses abounded in illustrations. These illustrations were drawn from nature and the familiar incidents of every-day life. The clouds in the west, the reddening sky at evening, the soft sighing of the wind, the lilies thick in the meadows, the birds twittering on the house-tops, the fig-tree by the way-side, the sower scattering his grain, the merchantman seeking goodly pearls, the busy trader in the market—these, and similar facts, were the vehicles by which he conveyed to the mind the most important truths. We are told that “the common people heard him gladly.” Often vast multitudes waited on his ministry. Unlike other great teachers, Christ had recourse to no artful contrivances to attract attention. He had no secret place to receive inquirers, and no particular hours to impart instruction. He had no esoteric doctrine, the communication of which he reserved for those who had undergone a long and laborious course of preparatory training. Whatever might be his teaching, the substance of it was addressed to all classes indiscriminately and irrespective of time or place. It might be in the crowded synagogue, or out on the breezy slope of a grassy hill, by the sea-side within hearing of its musical waves, or along the highway with its clouds of dust and oppressive heat; it might be in the early morn or in the dewy eve, on work-days or on Sabbath-days; but on all occasions Jesus spoke the same things more or less definitely to his disciples and to the multitude

generally. Two of his grandest discourses were delivered, the one to a poor woman who had come to draw water at Jacob's well, and the other to a single member of the Jewish sanhedrim, who had sought him by night. His words, his acts, his whole ministry, were marked by condescension to human ignorance and needs.

Would that all religious teachers would imitate this beautiful simplicity! Not the exaltation of self, but the understanding and acceptance of truth, should be the object of every discourse. Like a transparent stream, the flow of our speech should but reveal the thoughts which lie like polished pebbles in our hearts. Alas! too often we are like the colored glass which adorns the windows of some of our churches—we draw attention more to ourselves than the light we were intended to admit.

IV. A fourth characteristic of our Lord's teaching was courage.

It was an age of hollow formalism, of hypocrisy, and extreme wickedness, in which Christ lived. It was part of his work to expose and denounce this wickedness. It was necessary that he should do so in order to prepare the way for the establishment of his kingdom. The rank weeds must be uprooted that space might be found for the seed of the word to grow in. Christ shrunk not from attacking the corruptions of his day, however strongly intrenched they might be in public opinion, and though he foresaw that the contest must terminate in his death. His bitterest opponents were the scribes and Pharisees, the ecclesiastical leaders of the Jewish nation. Their whole life, though ostensibly pious, was in direct antagonism to the law of God. He did not hesitate to unveil their character and to lay bare their sins. He warned men against imbibing their teachings and following their example. As a result, their authority and influence were employed to impede his progress

and to effect his overthrow. But neither their hatred nor the plots they soon formed to take his life, though well known to him, could intimidate him or turn him from his course. As their malignity increased he became more open and unsparing in his invectives. He compared them to "whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and all uncleanness." He exposed their selfishness in "binding heavy burdens on men's shoulders," and refusing to "move them with one of their fingers." He showed their vanity and their pride in "making broad their phylacteries, and in loving the uppermost rooms at feasts and the chief seats in the synagogues." He inveighed against their rapacity in "devouring widows' houses, and for a pretense making long prayers." He condemned their blind zeal in "compassing sea and land to make one proselyte," and when they had succeeded, making him "twofold more the child of hell than themselves." "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers!" he exclaimed, "how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" Burning words from the lips of incarnate Love! But like the fierce flames which consume the dry stubble, they were necessary to prepare the field for the sowing of the precious grain. The wounds were deep, but they were only the long furrows of the plowshare as it upheaved the earth and made it ready for the fertilizing shower, the red baptism of his blood. Men must see in him the eternal enemy of sin before he could safely proclaim the glad tidings of salvation. Throughout his entire ministry he showed himself to be the "Amen, the faithful and true Witness." His courage rose as his situation became more perilous and martyrdom was inevitable. Though he knew what awaited him on his last journey to Jerusalem, "he steadfastly set his face to go up." The day after the failure to arrest him, and while the authorities were enraged at

the defection of the officers, "early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down and taught them." When at last he was apprehended and arraigned before the sanhedrim, and the high-priest, to secure his conviction, adjured him to tell them whether he was the Christ, the Son of God, though he knew that a cruel death must follow his confession, yet, setting his seal upon all that he had taught, including his maledictions upon themselves, he replied, "I am."

O for like intrepidity in those who are now called to proclaim his word! Brethren, we should preach "not as pleasing men, but God who trieth our hearts." It is our duty to denounce sin in all its forms and disguises, whatever may be the consequences to ourselves. We are not to smooth our tongue to flatter the rich or to gain the favor of the proud. Bravely, fearlessly, as "an iron pillar and brazen walls," we are to array ourselves against the selfishness, the injustice, the hypocrisy, the licentiousness, the wickedness of our time. Men may hate us and revile us for our fidelity, but we should remember that thus it was with our Master. Better far to endure their revilings here than to be stung by their reproaches hereafter. "*The fearful,*" as well as "*the unbelieving,*" have "*their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.*"

V Another characteristic of our Lord's teaching was tenderness.

The psalmist, predicting his advent, had portrayed him as "coming down like rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth." And along with his courageous denunciations of sin were evidences of compassionate solicitude for sinners; on the wing of the stormful blast came the soft rain of pitying love. At the close of his sermon in the synagogue at Nazareth, "all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his

mouth." His invitation to sinners without exception was: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." Those who came to him with their burdens of grief were tenderly received and bountifully blessed. Those who were indifferent to his kindness drew from him the lament, "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." For even the Pharisees, his relentless enemies, he was "grieved, because of the hardness of their hearts." Standing on Olivet, with Jerusalem before him—that city which was thirsting for his blood—he "wept over it, and said, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace!" Marvelous tenderness!—tenderness which every true minister must cultivate in order to success; tenderness which, like a stream in the desert, flows on and on, though lavished on barren and unappreciative sands.

Without detaining you on other characteristics of our Lord's teaching, enough has been said to show that he occupies the highest pedestal of wisdom, and is infinitely superior to all other teachers who have claimed the attention of men. "Never man spake like this man." His originality, his authority, his simplicity, his courage, his tenderness, stand without a parallel. A pertinent question in conclusion is, What is your attitude toward this incomparable teacher? Is it that of Mary of Bethany, who "sat at his feet," and listened so eagerly to his instructions? Is it that of the twelve disciples, who when others forsook him and he questioned them as to their fidelity replied: "Lord, to whom shall we go but unto thee? thou hast the words of eternal life." Do you prize his words? Do you esteem them sweeter than honey and more to be desired than gold? Is your fondness for them not a mere sentimental emotion, but a strong, dominant, and influential affection? Do you employ them to regulate your life? Do you look to them

for guidance in perplexity, for comfort in sorrow, for help in time of temptation and weakness? Perhaps some of you feel no interest in the words of the great Teacher. Perhaps they are positively distasteful to you, as antagonizing your present character, and coming into collision with your desires and purposes, your habits and dispositions. We would warn you not to despise this Teacher. You cannot disregard his words with impunity. This is he of whom Moses spoke when he said: "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee; and it shall come to pass that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him." "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh." "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words," saith Christ, "hath one that judgeth him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."

SERMON XIX.

THE STORM ON THE LAKE.

“Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.” (Mark vi. 50.)

NO sheet of water has greater attractions than the Sea of Galilee. Its natural charms are perhaps unsurpassed. A recent traveler describes it as a burnished mirror set in a frame-work of rounded hills and rugged mountains, which rise and roll backward and upward to where hoary Hermon hangs the picture against the blue vault of heaven.” But its associations give to it unrivaled interest. Along its shores our Saviour must have often walked with his disciples. In its crowded cities he performed some of his most wonderful miracles. Among its neighboring heights is “the high mountain apart,” where, to the mingled awe and joy of those who had accompanied him, he put off for awhile the frailties of humanity, and was “transfigured before them.” On an adjacent summit he delivered that sublime discourse which we so well know as “The Sermon on the Mount.” On yonder rocky eminence he gave liberty to the demoniac of Gadara. And upon that grassy slope, thick strewn with flowers, he fed the five thousand. Somewhere on that calm bosom, then lashed into fury by a sudden storm, he uttered the mandate, “Peace, be still.” And over those same waters, as on a floor of crystal, he once sped to the relief of his disciples, dispelling their fears, and infusing courage with the words, “Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.”

From the many sacred incidents connected with this lake, and which give to it such interest, we have selected

for consideration the storm with which our text is identified, and which, for the rich spiritual lessons it conveys, has been recorded by three of the evangelists. It was a sudden transition which the disciples experienced when overtaken by this storm. The day had been calm and beautiful, and they had spent it on the shore in the society of the Saviour, listening to his gracious words and beholding his mighty works. A great company was present—men, women, and children, who had come on foot from the towns and hamlets on the other side of the lake, and bands of pilgrims from the north and east on their way to Jerusalem, to celebrate the feast of the passover. Jesus, though seeking a brief interval of retirement and rest, could not refrain from discoursing to the multitude of the things of God; and such as were sick among them he healed; and as evening approached, seeing they were faint and hungry, he was touched with compassion, and directing them to sit down on the grass, he exerted his omnipotence, and with five loaves and two fishes fed the whole of the immense throng. No doubt it was a day of secret joy and exultation to the disciples. They were more than ever convinced that Jesus was the promised Messiah, and with this conviction arose visions of honor and happiness which they would enjoy when he should set up his kingdom. After such a day they find themselves on the deep in the midst of a storm. "It was dark;" thick clouds mantled the sky, and no star peered through to cheer them with its beam. "The wind was contrary;" it swept in fierce gusts from the deep gorges leading down from the mountains on the opposite side. "The ship was tossed with waves." The strain of the tempest was such that they had to lower the sail, and betake themselves to the oars. They "toiled in rowing." To add to their trouble, Jesus was not with them. He had sent them in advance to Bethsaida, while he re-

mained to dismiss the multitude. What a contrast to their circumstances a few hours before! How little did they anticipate such an ending to a day so delightful and auspicious! We have here, however, a picture of human life. All are liable to similar transitions. "We know not what a day may bring forth." From the high table-lands of prosperity we may suddenly be sent into the deep sea of adversity. The green grass and the soft sunlight of hope and pleasure may unexpectedly give place to the wild waves and bitter blasts of disappointment and sorrow. Look at Joseph, as, clad in his coat of many colors, his face aglow with innocence and love, and his thoughts at play, weaving the sweet dreams of youth, he approaches his brethren at Dothan. Surely he is in no immediate danger; yet, ere night, sold by his cruel brothers, he is in the hands of the Ishmaelites and on his way to spend years of exile and servitude in Egypt. Look at Job, famed for his wealth, revered for his sanctity, "the greatest of all the men of the East." It is a festival day with his children. Surely it will close as happily as it began; yet, ere night, with clothes rent and head shaven, he is prostrated upon the ground a poor, childless man. Look at David, the war-like and triumphant king. He is seated in his palace, secure, as he thinks, in the loyalty of his subjects; yet, ere night, weeping and barefoot, he has climbed the slope of Olivet, and is pressing forward to put, if possible, the Jordan between him and his pursuers. Sudden reverses may befall us. We may rise in health, but night may find us racked with pain and delirious with fever. We may go forth to our labor, glad at the thought that our family is still spared; but we may come home at eve to find one of the lambs missing—torn from the fold by the devourer death. We may think our business brightening, and begin to indulge the expectation of amassing wealth; but in a

single hour we may commit ourselves to a course which shall prove a treacherous whirlpool, drawing us quickly to the abyss of utter poverty. We should learn to expect adversity. We should be constantly prepared for trials. It is not gentle gales and smooth seas that Christ promises his servants. "In this world ye shall have tribulation."

The disciples were in the path of duty when they encountered this storm. Jesus had directed them to enter the vessel and cross to the other side. They had no occasion to reproach themselves with disobedience when they found themselves in such sudden jeopardy. The prophet Jonah was once overtaken by a similar storm. But he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord. He was acting, not in obedience, but in direct opposition, to an express command of God. His conscience at once told him that this storm was sent in consequence of his guilt. Said he to the frightened mariners: "Take me up and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you; for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you." It is important, brethren, to be sure of our Christian fidelity, when the subjects of affliction. We know then that however painful may be our lot, it is not in punishment of our sins. This itself should remove fear and awaken hope. We may safely infer that if our troubles are not punitive, then they are simply disciplinary. They are to improve and develop us. They are the drill of the recruit, that he may make the better soldier. They are the furnace for the silver, that it may be freed from remaining dross. All that is necessary on our part is endurance. If, however, we have sinned, then, like Jonah, we have reason to apprehend that our afflictions are the tokens of Divine wrath. They may not be sent to destroy, but they certainly are to correct and warn us. They are the first swift rain-drops from the blackening heavens, which urge us to flee for shelter before

the lightnings flash and the thunders roll along our path. They demand not endurance, but repentance. Brother, are you in any trouble? It should be your endeavor to ascertain whether your affliction has befallen you in the path of duty, or whether it has come upon you as the penalty of transgression. If you have "a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men," however great may be your calamities, it is your privilege to be serene and joyful. The moaning of the blast may be to you as sweet as the music of the zephyr, and the leaping of the waves as glorious as the bosom of the deep when without a ripple, and all aglow with the sun's bright beams. If you are living in opposition or in indifference to the will of God, I advise you to regard your affliction as designed to humble you and bring you to repentance. Amend your ways, and cry to your offended but long-suffering God for mercy and forgiveness. Do not imagine your troubles to be for "the trial of your faith," when they are plainly intended to remind you of your sins. Be not too ready to apply the balm of gospel promises to your wound, before you extract the poisoned arrow which has made it, and for the presence of which you are yourself responsible. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."

It is worthy of note that the Saviour constrained the disciples to take this voyage. It seems that they were reluctant to go; but he overruled every objection, and insisted on their departure. In doing this, his immediate object, we think, was to preserve them from a course which would have been displeasing to himself. The vast multitude, who had just witnessed his miracles, were persuaded that he must be the Messiah. Their conception of the Messiah was a temporal monarch, who should exalt the Jewish people to preëminence among the nations of the earth; who should make Jerusalem the metropolis of a

world-wide empire, and who should bestow upon his subjects every conceivable enjoyment. Weary of Roman domination, and rejoicing in the belief that they had at last found the promised Deliverer, they resolved among themselves "to take him by force and make him a king." We doubt not that, with their unspiritual views of the kingdom of Christ, the disciples were in sympathy with this movement. Ambitious as they were, such an uprising would bring them at once into prominence, and insure to them a speedy investiture of those dignities which, as the chosen followers of the Messiah, they were constantly expecting. At this juncture Jesus interposed. It is no part of his plan to establish a secular kingdom. A tumultuous demonstration in his behalf, by exciting the ire of the authorities, would only entail misery upon the people, and be the means, moreover, of interfering with the continuance of his ministry. Summoning the twelve from the whispering groups which had already begun to gather around them as the chiefs of the coming kingdom, he "straightway constrained them to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side." So then, just as they were hoping to see Jesus resume the scepter of David, and assign to them posts of honor in his service, this was a most unwelcome voyage. In ordering it, however, the Saviour consulted their highest interests. It was better far that they should go and suffer than that they should stay and sin. It was better far that they should wrestle with the raging tempest, conscious of his approval, than that they should remain on the shore to be pierced with a sense of his displeasure. It is, no doubt, for a similar purpose that Christ often subjects us to affliction. He sends us out into the deep, where the winds are boisterous and the waves roar, to preserve us from some fatal step which we would have taken if left to sit on the smooth slopes of worldly prosperity. Brethren, we

should beware of murmuring at what may seem to our ignorance and fear a dark dispensation of Providence. It may be but the fulfillment of the promise, "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape." It may be but an answer to the prayer which we daily offer, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

It is observable that the disciples, when caught in the storm, did not turn back. They had been directed to proceed to Bethsaida, and thither they continued to steer. The wind, however, was from the very point which they aimed to reach, and with all their rowing, hour after hour, they made but little progress. Men less obedient than the disciples would have returned, rather than have braved that terrible storm. But the mandate of the Master was most positive and peremptory; and, though at the hazard of life, they resolved to obey it. In this respect they are worthy of our imitation. We should never refrain from the discharge of our duties because of the trials we may meet with. We should bend to the work of fulfilling our task though all hell lift up its voice and rage around us. We should learn what is God's will concerning us, and then do it, at whatever cost. Alas, how many decline in their obedience when calamities befall them! Fair-weather Christians, they shirk their responsibilities, and betake themselves to a sinful repose on the first burst of the blast and the first swell of the sea. Brethren, it is a reproach to our manhood to yield obedience only when blue skies bend over us, and soft winds speed us to our destined port. Listen to Luther. When his friends dissuaded him from going to Worms, he replied: "Though there were as many devils in Worms as there are tiles on the house-tops, yet will I go forward." Listen to Polycarp. Urged by the pagan pro-

consul to abjure the Saviour and save his life, he answered: “Eighty and six years have I been his servant, yet in all that time hath he not so much as once hurt me; how then may I speak evil of my King and Sovereign Lord who has thus preserved me?” Listen to Paul. With every possible evil before him; he exclaims: “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation; or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things are we more than conquerors, through him that loved us.” Like them, “let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in *well-doing*, as unto a faithful Creator.” If death is our only deliverance from the storm, let it find us with our prow pointing heavenward, and our oars quivering in our outstretched hands.

But where was Jesus while the disciples were on the sea? What was his employment while they were exposed to the fury of the storm? Having dismissed the multitude, he had retired to a mountain for prayer. There, under some leafy canopy, with nothing to disturb his solitude but the wailing wind, he passed the hours in communion with his Divine Father. Doubtless mingling with the petitions which he offered that night were supplications for his disconsolate and tempted disciples. Jesus was never selfish in his prayers. If he prayed for himself, it was chiefly that he might be better qualified as man for his stupendous work of saving our world. He still prays for his followers; not as then, however, in silence and loneliness, but amid the harpings and halleluiahs of angels and the spirits of just men made perfect. Yes; far away on Mount Zion, the heavenly hill, swept from our sight by the veil of the Invisible, “he ever liveth to make intercession for us.” How consoling should this fact be to the afflicted saint! Thy Saviour prays for thee; he prays that “thy faith fail not;”

he prays that "as thy days so may thy strength be;" he prays that the Divine Spirit may be given to nourish and support thee when "in heaviness through manifold temptations." Remember the unfailing efficacy of his prayers. When were his petitions for his servants ever denied? At the grave of Lazarus, "Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, Father, I thank thee, that thou hast heard me. And I know that thou hearest me always." Rest assured, brethren, if you should prove recreant and unfaithful, it will not be because you had not "grace to help in time of need."

Jesus, while in the mount, watched his disciples, as well as prayed for them. It is said "he saw them toiling in rowing." Though they were far out upon the sea, and darkness between them, they were as visible to him as though it were day and he were with them in the ship. He saw every crested billow that assailed their trembling bark; he saw every dip of their oars as they struggled onward against wind and wave; he saw the look of anxiety which was stamped upon their countenances; he saw the very thoughts which disturbed their minds, and the very fears which distressed their souls. And are we not watched by him in our afflictions? Is there a single tear which he does not see? Is there a single sigh which he does not hear? No distance, no darkness, is able to exclude us from his view. Though far removed from us in his exalted and glorified manhood, yet, as divine, his glance penetrates imminency and beholds all things. His eye is upon every widow and upon every orphan; his eye is upon the poor in their perplexities and sorrows; his eye is upon every victim of cruelty and oppression; his eye is upon the sick, as they lie and pine for departed health; his eye is upon the tempted as they strive through weary days and months and years with the prince of darkness. Brethren, the saints

have often been immured in dungeons, where the light of the sun could not reach them; they have often been where no human friend could approach to utter a sympathizing word, or bend on them a loving look; but, blessed be God, they have never been where Jesus could not see them. Gates of iron and walls of granite are no obstacles to his all-seeing eye. The disciples would have felt encouraged had they known that he was watching them in the storm. We too shall feel stronger and more hopeful in our trials if we bear in mind that the eye of our Master is upon us. Soldiers fight best when conscious that their commander is observing them; and we shall be more valiant and resolute in the discharge of our duties while sensible that we are under the glance of "the Captain of our salvation."

It was not until the fourth watch of the night—three o'clock in the morning—that Jesus went to the rescue of his disciples. Why this delay? How much sooner he might have gone, had he seen fit. It was, no doubt, to educate them for future trials that he thus prolonged his absence. He knew that in a little while he should need them to steer a mightier ship through a more terrible sea. His visible presence would be withdrawn, and they would be left to maintain his cause against storms of opposition and waves of blood. He would now teach them that though removed from him they were not forgotten, and that through the very elements which threatened their destruction he would come to their relief in the hour of their extremity. The memory of that midnight storm on the Sea of Galilee should sustain and strengthen them when exposed to persecution, imprisonment, and death.

Just here we may mark the progressive steps by which our Lord developed the faith of his disciples. A short time before they were in a storm on the same sea; but on this occasion Jesus was with them, though asleep. After strug-

gling in vain with the tempest, "they come to him and awake him, crying, Master, Master, we perish! Then he came, and rebuked the wind, and the raging of the water; and they ceased, and there was a calm." Now, however, he leaves them alone on the deep. Their faith has for its encouragement his previous miracle of stilling the sea. Quite likely the remembrance of that interposition inspired them to go forward, though the storm was so furious and the Master absent. The Lord dealt with them as the eagle with her fledgelings, when she would teach them to fly. Pushing them over the edge of the nest, she watches them fluttering until, exhausted and frightened, they cease to strive, and plunge downward to the rocks, when, interposing her outstretched wing, she saves them from perishing and bears them aloft to their eyrie. Again and again she tries them, until at last, their pinions stronger and their confidence increased, she leaves them alone to cleave the air and soar upward above the clouds.

Brethren, our trials are often to inure and prepare us for still greater trials. It is one of the crowning excellences of the renewed man that he be "strong in faith, giving glory to God." By degrees Jesus gives occasion for the development of the faith, and thus gradually qualifies us to honor him in the performance of the more arduous duties to which, in his providence, he may subsequently call us. The experience of his mercy and tenderness under lighter afflictions will encourage us to be steadfast when greater demands are made upon our faith. Like David, when we discern the approach of a fierce tempest, we shall exclaim: "Why art thou disquieted within me, O my soul? hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance and my God."

Strong faith is not only valuable as an ornament to character and a qualification for usefulness, but it is a source

of comfort to those who possess it. In traveling on the cars, I have often noticed, when we stopped, that the train hands would go round, and with a heavy hammer strike each of the wheels. This was to ascertain if any of them had suffered a fracture on the way; and when this was done, and no injury detected, I felt safer and more cheerful as we sped forward through the mountains and valleys, and over rivers and streams. So, when our faith remains intact, notwithstanding through trial, we have increased grounds to expect a happy termination to our journey to the skies.

We notice, in conclusion, that when the disciples were assured of the proximity of Christ their fears were instantly dispelled. At first they mistook him for a spirit, and they cried out in terror; but not greater was the calm which spread over the sea on his entrance into the ship than the quiet which stole into their troubled hearts when they heard the familiar voice, saying, in tones of ineffable sweetness: "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid."

Fierce was the wild billow,
Dark was the night;
Oars labored heavily,
Foam glimmered white;
Mariners trembled,
Peril was nigh,
Then said the Son of God,
"Peace! it is I."

Ridge of the mountain wave,
Lower thy crest!
Wail of Euroclydon,
Be thou at rest!
Peril can never be,
Sorrow must fly
When saith the Light of life,
"Peace! it is I."

Jesus, Deliverer,
 Come thou to me ;
Soothe thou my voyaging
 Over life's sea ;
Then when the storm of death
 Roars sweeping by,
Whisper, O Truth of truth,
 "Peace ! it is I."

SERMON XX.

GRAY HAIRS.

"Gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not."
(Hos. vii. 9.)

AGE steals upon us unawares. One after another the silver threads mingle with the raven locks, and often exist in considerable numbers before a closer inspection in the mirror, or the gentle word of a friend, apprises us of their presence. A similar unconsciousness marks the progress of spiritual declension. There may be many infallible tokens of enfeebled moral strength which long escape our notice; and not until we are led by the Divine Spirit to a more than ordinary examination of ourselves in the light of the gospel, or our condition is made known to us by some Christian friend, do we awake to the fact that we are approaching the borders of spiritual death.

Brethren, I would not have us to be self-deceived. It would be a terrible thing for us to enter eternity and find that we had been lapsing for years, and were now irretrievably lost, when we had thought that we were morally sound, and as such entitled to the kingdom of light. Says the apostle: "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves." Let us heed this solemn admonition. Let us scrutinize ourselves, and ascertain as far as possible our condition before God. I will state what I consider the unmistakable symptoms of religious declension—point out the "gray hairs" which are the evident forerunners of spiritual decrepitude and death.

1. You may discern a gray hair *where there is neglect of prayer, or habitual coldness when engaged in devotional exercises.*

Prayer is an essential feature of the Christian life. It is vain to claim to be pious if we do not pray. Prayer is communion with God; it is the channel through which flows to us the riches of his grace; and he who is too proud or indolent to pray excludes himself from the Divine favor, and from the enjoyment of those blessings which are indispensable to the happiness of man. A true Christian delights in prayer. He would sooner deprive himself of his daily meals, or forego the most coveted of worldly pleasures, than cease from his devotions. Prayer is to him a fountain in the desert where he can refresh his parched lips and gain strength for the remainder of the way. It is a high hill piercing above the clouds, and climbing to the summit of which he can escape the gloom of the present, and regale himself with a wide and ecstatic prospect. He who is reconciled to God, he who has the access of a beloved child to the ear of his Heavenly Father, will not be indifferent to the privilege of prayer. He will pray often. He will not be satisfied with stated seasons of devotion, but will ejaculate his desires and wants through the business of the day, and even in the night-watches. True, he may now and then find prayer a struggle; but like Jacob's wrestle with the angel amid the loneliness and darkness of the Jabbok, if persevered in, it will end in victory and the bestowment of a princely blessing. True, his prayer may now and then be little more than the plaintive utterance of his sorrows; but, as in the case of the disciples who went with saddened countenance from Jerusalem to Emmaus, he will be joined by one who will open to him the Scriptures and cause his heart to burn with an unearthly joy. What a refuge was prayer to David! He says: "From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed." What a joy was prayer to Daniel! Rather than forego it, he preferred to be cast into

the lions' den. What a source of strength and comfort must prayer have been to Christ! At the beginning of his ministry we read of him: "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out and departed into a solitary place and there prayed." In Gethsemane, "being in an agony, he prayed *more earnestly*." "Is any among you afflicted?" asks St. James; and his answer is, "Let him pray." O there is relief, there is consolation, there is rapture to be experienced in the exercise of prayer! It is said of Payson that "his mind at times almost lost its sense of the external world in the ineffable thoughts of God's glory, which rolled like a sea of light around him at the throne of grace." It is said of one of the Tennents that "on one occasion, when he was engaged in secret devotion, so overpowering was the revelation of God which opened upon his soul that at length he recoiled from the intolerable joy, as from a pain, and besought God to withhold from him further manifestations of his glory." It may not be given to all to realize such intense joy in their devotions; but no man can be living in a state of acceptance with God and find prayer destitute of attractions. It will communicate peace, it will give strength in the hour of temptation, it will inspire courage for the performance of duty, it will support under the burden of affliction, and it will cheer the soul with foretastes of celestial bliss.

Brethren, what is prayer to you? Do you esteem it a precious privilege? Can you adopt the language of the psalmist and say, "It is good for me to draw near to God?" Is the footstool of Jehovah the place where, next to heaven, you delight to be? Do you love to linger there, and do you often speed to it, if only for a moment, amid the cares and distractions of your daily toil? Some of you, perhaps, have grown neglectful of prayer. You have lost that relish for it which distinguished you of old. Devotion is now a bur-

den, rather than a pleasure; it is a winter journey, with the fields all brown and the birds all mute; not as it used to be, a summer sail adown placid streams, with banks glittering in green, and sweet odors wafted from blossoming meads, and sounds of melody floating on the ear. You are now not often on your knees. The upward glance and the deep-meaning sigh have almost ceased. It is not uncommon for you to rise in the morning and go forth to your labor without a thought of God, and, it may be, the day is far advanced before you recall your omission and endeavor to make amends with a few heartless petitions. Weeks pass, perhaps, and neither in your closet nor in the sanctuary have you any joy. What does this betoken? What but a state of spiritual declension? A gray hair is visible, indicative of waning strength, and the herald of approaching death.

2. You may discover a gray hair *where there is a decided preference for the society of worldly persons.*

Conversion creates new tastes, new sympathies. This is especially noticeable in relation to our companionships. The persons toward whom we were drawn when we were living in rebellion against God do not meet the demands of our friendship when we are renewed by Divine grace. There is now such a dissimilarity between ourselves and them in point of character and purpose that we do not coalesce as formerly, but repel each other by virtue of our difference. They recoil from our purity as the diseased eye from the presence of the light. We can find no pleasure in their depravity. We are pained to witness their hostility to God; we are shocked to mark the course of conduct which they pursue. Even their conversation, irreverent and irreligious as it often is, is distasteful to our ears. We feel it incumbent upon us to seek other friendships. Our affections, like vines that gather around some stately col-

umn, attach themselves to the pure and good. We prefer the society of the people of God. We delight to mingle with those who exhibit the mind of Christ. Their sphere may be lowly, their circumstances may be unattractive; but to us they are as palms in the desert, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. "We be brethren." We had rather spend an hour with a poor saint in a dismal cabin, talking of Christ and heaven, than to spend a week in a palace with some lordly sinner, from whose lips we should hear no syllable of fealty to God. Yes, we "would rather be a door-keeper in the house of our God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."

Brethren, does this describe your experience? You certainly felt thus when you were converted to God. How is it with you now? Do you still prefer the communion of saints? are those who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity your friends above all others? What evidence do you give of the strength and ardor of your attachment? When the Sabbath dawns, does it find you glad of an opportunity of assembling in the sanctuary, there to unite with the people of God in supplication and praise? or, are you then eager for an excuse to absent yourselves, that you may pass the day in the society of some worldly person, either lounging at home or riding about through the land? When there is prayer-meeting through the week, are you anxious to be there that you may encourage others by your presence, and receive cheer and help from your mutual petitions? or, is the sound of the church-bell barely noticed by you, and do you suffer the hour to slip by in gay jest and laugh with those who have no fear of God before their eyes? There are some of your brethren, perhaps, who have but lately entered on the Christian life; there are others who are bowed down with grief and care. Do you sympathize with them? are you prompt to instruct and comfort them?

or, are you careless as to their condition? Are you so engrossed with those of a different stamp—the men of the world who have their portion in this life, the thoughtless, the evil—that you have scarcely leisure or disposition to interest yourselves in the weal or woe of those whose name you bear? O my brethren, answer these questions before God to-day! If the children of the wicked one are more attractive than the children of God; if you are more inclined to seek the society of those who are at variance with the divine law than those who are striving to obey it; if the puns and jokes of the unbelieving and impenitent are sweeter to you than the songs and prayers of the disciples of Christ, we are bold to tell you that you have occasion for alarm; a gray hair is visible, betokening deterioration, and prophesying death.

3. You may discern a gray hair *where there is apathy in regard to the salvation of sinners.*

While Christians are indisposed to cultivate intimacy with the wicked, they feel for them the deepest compassion. They know that “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.” They are aware of the jeopardy in which sinners stand; they see the black clouds which are gathering on the horizon; they hear the moan of the ocean as it is lashed by the coming storm; and they know that the frail pleasure-boats, which, deceived by the morning calm, have ventured out to sea, will speedily be overwhelmed and lost, unless, pausing, they reverse their oars and with strong and rapid pull make for the receding shore. It is an awful fate which awaits the finally impenitent. Hell is God’s final curse; it is the total eclipse of his blessed countenance; it is a firmament of darkness without one glimmering star; a prospect, throughout immensity of time and space, unrelieved by a single joy. As Christians, it is impossible for us to be un-

concerned while any of our fellows are exposed to such misery, and means are at our disposal by which we may hope to effect their rescue. In proportion as we resemble Christ, in proportion as we are animated and controlled by that love which is "the fulfilling of the law," will be our solicitude for the salvation of sinners. Our sympathy will be practical. It will not exhaust itself in sighs and tears and lamentations. It will prompt to vigorous and persistent action. It will lead us to present ourselves before God in prayer, and, like Abraham for Sodom, plead with him again and again in behalf of sinners. It will lead us to expostulate with them in person, and with words of meekness and gentleness beseech them to flee the wrath to come. It will lead us to watch over ourselves in our daily walk, lest by any dereliction on our part they may suspect us of insincerity, and harden themselves in iniquity. It will lead us to contribute cheerfully and liberally to the support of the various instrumentalities by which their salvation may be achieved. To hear of the conversion of a sinner will be to us the occasion of exultant joy. To know that we have been ourselves the instruments of bringing some from darkness to light will be sweeter far than to know that we possess millions of gold.

Brethren, are you zealous for the salvation of sinners? Is your "heart's desire and prayer to God that they might be saved?" Do you commiserate their condition, and exert yourselves to the extent of your ability to lead them to repentance? O how earnestly you labored for them immediately after your conversion! Let memory recall those days. It seemed then as though you could no more restrain yourselves from striving to do good than the flowers can keep from blooming; and the trees from flinging out their foliage when the spring has come and south winds are whispering through the land. You would stop the

young man who was living recklessly in sin, and taking him aside would relate to him your experience, and urge him to seek the Lord. You would lift up your heart in prayer, as you sped along the street, and implore God to have mercy on those who were regardless of his laws. You were regular in your attendance on the prayer-meeting; for you were eager to be there, to unite with others in beseeching a special outpouring of the Holy Ghost on the Church and the community. If you were asked for money to help push the conquests of the gospel in distant lands, you were never found reluctant to respond. How is it with you now? Has the stream of your Christian energy evaporated like some rivulet in the heat of a summer sun? Have you lost the deep sympathy, the tender, loving interest in imperiled souls which distinguished you in days gone by? Perhaps whole months now elapse, and you make no direct effort to convince one unbelieving mind, or to subdue one impenitent heart. You utter no word of entreaty, you shed in secret no tear of pity, you offer no agonizing prayer of intercession. Sinners look to you from out the sea of sin, upon which they are tossing; but no light streams from you upon the black foaming rocks toward which they are drifting in the darkness. They are sailing all merrily down the swift river which ends in the measureless cataract of everlasting woe; and standing on the shore, you give no signal of alarm and shout no voice of warning. Ah, brethren, I should be recreant to my duty were I not to tell you that you are *yourselves* in danger! You are losing the life you derived from Christ, and are fast going down to the grave of spiritual corruption. The dew of your youth has vanished, and upon your head is the gray hair, ominous of coming death.

4. You may discern a gray hair *where there is an undue anxiety for the acquisition of wealth.*

Religion is not opposed to industry. St. Paul reminds the Thessalonians that while with them he "commanded them, that if any would not work, neither should he eat." Elsewhere he enjoins it as a duty, that we be "not slothful in business." It is quite right, therefore, under certain limitations, to endeavor to improve our temporal circumstances. There is nothing sinful in the accumulation of wealth, provided we amass it honestly, and do not allow it to interfere with the discharge of our obligations to God and to our neighbor. There is guilt attaching to us, however, when in our desire for wealth, or even for the sake of a livelihood, we engage in occupations or lend our influence to schemes which are inimical to the cause of God, and injurious to the best interests of our fellows. We are open too to the charge of sin when, forgetting our dependence on God, we suspend our happiness on the possession of wealth, and are discontented and miserable if it is denied us, or taken from us. We incur the Divine wrath, moreover, when, in our thirst for riches, we neglect the religious culture of our souls, and are at little pains to bring forth the fruits of holiness. We come under condemnation also when, in the pursuit of gain, we stoop to dishonesty and falsehood, and are careless of regulating our conduct by the law of righteousness and truth. We are verily guilty too when, to indulge our avarice, we steel our hearts against the appeals of the indigent and suffering, and give, if at all, but grudgingly and sparingly to their relief. While there is nothing wrong in the simple desire and effort to be wealthy, it behooves us to desire and labor for it in such a way as is consistent with the various requirements of the Divine will, and chiefly that we may be more favorably situated, and have more abundant opportunities for serving God and being useful to mankind. Like the full lake among the mountains, which sends down streams,

bearing beauty and fertility to the plains, so, if we toil for wealth, it shall be that with barns full and purses overflowing we may be "rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store a good foundation against the time to come." The heart is deceitful, however, and needs watching right here. An undue anxiety for worldly prosperity should instantly alarm us. We should be quick to repress it at whatever cost. Christ says: "Take heed, and beware of covetousness." St. Paul says: "They that *will* be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." Alas, how many Christians, overcome by covetousness, have ultimately lost their peace, and forfeited their hope of heaven! O the folly of those who make an idol of money, and yield to it the homage of their hearts! We go forth at dawn, and there, in dewy sweetness, are the morning-glories, with wide open petals, waiting to welcome the ascending sun. The sun rises, and, as though well pleased, kisses them softly and tenderly for an hour; but soon he pours on them his hot beams, and, unable to endure his burning glance, the bright beauties quickly fade and perish. So it is with the sun of wealth, toward which so many look with ardent and adoring eye. For a brief while they bask in the ecstatic glow which spreads over the surface of their life; but how soon it ends! and the very object they worshiped, far from imparting bliss, "pierces them through with many sorrows."

Brethren, are you free from covetousness? Do you estimate money at its real worth, and if you wish and work for it, is it principally that you may glorify God? You know how secondary and subordinate it was with you when you were converted. How is it with you now? Do you allow it to trench on time that should be given to God in

the closet or in the sanctuary. Do you allow it to lead you to neglect the oversight of your family and the right training of your children? Has it made you in any wise untruthful or unjust? Do you hoard what you have gained as though your happiness depended on its possession? Is your desire to "get on" so great that you have no alms for the poor, and no tithes for the gospel? Is your passion so intense and all-consuming that you cannot endure to see the superior prosperity of another? O brethren, take the candle of the Lord and explore the deep caverns of your hearts to-day! It is not unlikely that some of you are unduly anxious for the acquisition of "this world's goods." If, then, your anxiety leads you to act selfishly and ignorably, if it leads you to act otherwise than in accordance with the requirements of godliness, uprightness, and charity, you are under the influence of covetousness; a gray hair is upon your head, telling of spiritual decline and foreboding eternal death.

"Gray hairs are here and there upon him, *yet he knoweth not.*" O fatal ignorance! I pray God that if any of those gray hairs are upon your head, you may not fail to discover them to-day. Alas for you if, closing your eyes to your sinfulness, you should only learn it at last, to your unavailing horror, in the red light of hell!

As a rule, the grayer a man is the nearer is he to death and the grave; and the more of these gray hairs you have upon your heads, the nearer you are to that deeper death which consists in the separation of the soul from the favor of God, and to that gloomier grave "where their worm dieth not and the fire is never quenched."

Thank God, however, I need not leave you without a word of consolation. O my backslidden brother, my erring sister, recovery is possible if you will but seek it promptly. "There is balm in Gilead and a Physician

there." Go to Christ; he is able, by the application of his precious blood, and by the quickening energy of his Spirit, to "renew your youth like the eagle's." Go to him; tell him of your misery, and implore his help. Cry out, like one of old, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on me!" It shall not be in vain. At his healing word your "gray hairs" will disappear, and, freed from the deadly power of sin, which has insinuated itself into your system, his own eternal life will pulsate afresh in each spiritual vein.

SERMON XXI.

THE CHURCH AS THE LAMB'S WIFE.

“Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?” (Solomon’s Song vi. 10.)

THE Song of Solomon has all the elements of a great poem. Its subject is as sublime as the diadem of day, its structure is as unique as the pyramids of the plains, its imagery is as gorgeous as an autumn sky at eve, while its numbers are as mellifluous as the purling of streams in the summer shade. It has fields for the fancy, gems for the garnishing of wisdom, and delicious nectar for the troubled soul. Though hoary with age, the crust of centuries upon it, it stands forth as one of those majestic mounts on which generations have gazed and never grown weary. It is as fresh as ever. We welcome it as we welcome the visits of spring; we look on it as we look on the rainbow; and we love it as we love those beautiful days, so calm, so fair,

When every prospect pleases,
And only man is vile.

The song celebrates the union which subsists between Christ and his Church. The nuptials of Solomon with the charming Shulamite supply a vehicle highly suited to the purpose. The closest of earthly ties is selected to express the mutual affection, the delectable intercourse, the similarity of sentiment, the harmony of purpose, which characterize Christ and his people. As in the Apocalypse and other portions of inspired writ, the Church is here represented as “the Lamb’s wife;” and throughout the song the bride and bridegroom are heard, alternately declaring their admir-

tion and delight, and ascribing to each other the highest excellence love could crave.

We have in our text a burst of joy from Christ on contemplating the perfections and prospective glories of his spouse, the Church. "Who is she," he asks, "that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?" To the Church, as thus portrayed, we invite attention on this occasion. We have for consideration,

I. The beauty of the Church. "She is fair as the moon."

A more apposite figure could scarcely have been selected. Who has not been impressed with the superb loveliness of the moon? A glorious spectacle is she, when in the stillly night, unbroken save by the rustle of the tired zephyrs, or the distant rumbling of some gay one's chariot, the pale goddess ascends her spangled throne, scatters silver among the loyal clouds which have awaited her appearance, and enrolling them in her service hastens on to chase away the shadows in the vale. We wonder not that the poet has drank inspiration from her charms, and young genius exulted in reproducing on canvas her triumphant march. We wonder not that the shepherd has sung his sweetest carols while basking in her mellow light, and the poor, deluded heathen rendered her the homage due to Him who robed the hills with green and paved immensity with all its radiant jewels. But fair as she is, not less so (to a spiritual eye) is "the Church of the living God." She is "the perfection of beauty." And here we speak of her more particularly as the repository of that light which, like the moon, she has received from a higher source—the light of truth—truth as to the character of God, truth as to the necessities of man, truth as to the mediation of Christ, truth as to the allotments of eternity. Reflecting this light, rising with it on the darkness of man's moral night, how re-

splendent her appearance! “Behold, ye despisers, and wonder!” See her, as age after age she pursues her ethereal course! Does she shine on the summits of thought? they beam with the brightness of heaven. Does she strike through the mists of depravity? the contrite are cheered by her smile. Does she follow the windings of doubt? light falls on the gathering gloom. Does she walk o'er the waves of affliction? they hush at the sound of her step. “Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah!” is the exclamation of Him to whom her comeliness is best known. “Thine head upon thee is like Carmel, and the hair of thine head like purple; the king is held in the galleries.” Consider,

II. The purity of the Church. She is “clear as the sun.”

The sun, so far as the naked eye is concerned, is the most lucid object in nature. As such it is frequently employed in Scripture, as an emblem of holiness. “The Sun of righteousness” was the title applied by Malachi to the Saviour, when predicting his approaching advent. And doubtless there is an allusion to the same sublime luminary when Bildad, declaring to Job the unrivaled holiness of God, exclaims: “Behold even to the moon, and it shineth not; yea, the stars are not pure in his sight!”

It is in her purity, we think, that Christ compares the Church to the sun; and indeed as an instrumentality for the enlightenment and recovery of mankind, as employed to “show forth the praises of Him who hath called her out of darkness into his marvelous light.” “Zion’s righteousness goes forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.” No other orb, however ancient, however bright, can abide her presence. She teaches a code of morals before whose strong, searching light, the purest ethics of heathen philosophy are lost in eternal shade. We have only to glance to the firmament of thought to see what

pallor, what dimness, she has cast on the dreams of Buddhism, the precepts of Confucianism, the imaginings of Mohammedanism, and the prouder reasonings of the lyceum and the academy, of the stoic and the epicurean. Moreover, unlike those blind leaders of the blind, she makes known the means of purification. They indeed discerned dimly wherein purity consisted, but their discovery was as the pool of Tantalus—exciting importunate desire, but on attempting to enjoy it, sweeping far out of reach. “But there is a fountain open to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and uncleanness.” A cry, musical as the sound of many waters, comes from her midst: “Wash ye; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” And to admit of no doubt of her Bethesda, she points to the vast numbers who have experienced its life-giving power, and are now examples “in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in purity.” These are her children, “renewed in the spirit of their mind, and have put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” You, dear sinner, may be like them. Because of “certain men” who have “crept in unawares,” and because of others who from want of vigilance allow themselves ever and anon to be deprived of the righteousness they had attained, their names are indeed stigmatized by a wicked world. “The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter!” But while they may appear only as faint nebulæ to the earthly eye, they are as blazing suns to Him who regards them from above. Men may recoil from them as from serpents, but God draws nigh to them as to seraphs; his smile is upon them, his loving-kindness is manifested to them. Now, indeed, they may be enveloped in obscurity, and often

undistinguished; but when this mundane sphere shall be wrapped in flame, consume, and pass away; when temple and tower, palace and pyramid, all the proud piles of human grandeur, shall disappear as beaded bubbles in the fiery tide—up higher, in a land where no storm ever comes, and where none but the pure can dwell, they “shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars forever and ever.” Consider,

III. The power of the Church. She is “terrible as an army with banners.”

What an idea of strength does this figure suggest! We recollect reading in the days of our childhood an eloquent description of the spectacle here alluded to. We cannot now recall the language of the writer, but never shall we forget the impression it made upon us. We had heard of the stern lion’s roar, startling the denizens of the forest, and turning even the hardy hunter from the chase. We had witnessed the angel of the storm speeding along the sky, smiting the proud hills with his burning feet, and lifting the sturdy oak as a mere feather in his angry grasp. We had seen the ocean, when roused from its midnight slumber, become white with rage, and while thundering its deafening defiance, rush hither and thither in pursuit of its mocking tormentor. But none of these awoke such a sense of power in our mind as the picture of that army formed in line at the sound of the morning trumpet, and then moving on beneath a summer sky, the sunbeams mirrored in their burnished steel, the ground trembling with the weight of their artillery; their banners, pierced in many a battle, floating on the breeze; music stealing from their midst and echoing among the rocks; and their hearts, so stout and brave, panting wildly for vengeance on the coming foe.

It is to a scene similar to this that Christ refers as illustrating the power of the Church. She is “terrible as an

army with banners." And is she not worthy of the figure? For ages past her chosen generation have been achieving a conquest eclipsing in magnitude and splendor the most renowned of an Alexander, a Tamerlane, or a Cæsar. "Not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places," have they striven. Commanded by Jesus, and armed with the whole panoply of God—the hope of salvation their helmet, righteousness their breastplate, truth their guide, faith their broad shield, the word of God their two-edged sword—boldly have they gone forth "to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." Their first battle—fought at Jerusalem—was a victory, and added three thousand to their ranks. But this was only an earnest of the golden future. Onward, as some mighty, surging tempest, swept their conquering feet! and but little time elapsed before the gods of Greece were in ashes, and the rage of Rome spent as a noonday shower in spring. Then, however, came reverses. Into many of the branches of the luxuriant tree, which waved so proudly to the casual eye, the worm of carnality had been eating. Suddenly the foe which was thought subdued and trampled under foot, sprung forth from the very midst of Zion, and with red, remorseless arm hastened to mow down "the sacramental host of God's elect." Then was a time of darkness, defeat, and unutterable woe to the Church. But at length Luther and Melanchthon arose, and by their radiant light dissipated the gloom of that awful night. Ever since the Reformer burned the "Bull of Leo" at the gates of Wittenberg, the tide of conquest has been rolling onward with the sons of God. Now "the stone cut out of the mountain without hands" fills the whole civilized world. Now the paw of "the Lion of the tribe of Judah" clutches India in its

grasp, and is dashing its idols in pieces. Now the “Scepter of Israel” waves over the confines of China, and multitudes are bowing to its serene sway. Now “the Star to come out of Jacob” soars high over the southern seas, and the isles rejoice because of its appearance. And now “beautiful upon the mountains” of the West, where naught was heard but the sighing of the solitary cedar and the wild whoop of the warlike Indian, “are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings.”

We must not suppose, however, that the Church remains unattacked. Infidelity is still busy steeling the hearts of her adherents, and urging them, ever and anon, to give battle to the host of God. Fanaticism is darting aloft on the wings of the eagle, inducing the imprudent to exchange “the weapons of their warfare” for a “banner with a strange device—‘Excelsior!’” and climb upward to the glassy slope of death. “Science, falsely so called,” is diving into the bowels of the earth to procure rocks and fossils to throw at us, and using the utmost ingenuity to create a panic by persuading us that “the stars fight in their courses against us.” Popery is marshaling her strength, and unsatiated with the blood of the past lurks tiger-like in the shade, ready with open jaws to pounce upon the advancing train of truth. Ritualism, an angel from the bottomless pit, clad in the gorgeous colors of the rainbow, and promising the brimming cup of heaven, is in many places corrupting the followers of Immanuel. Moreover, there are forms of heresy floating about, with their siren sweetness beguiling the unwary to embrace them, which done, they go down with their unthinking prey to the gleaming pit of hell. Still, amid all her adversaries, the Church lifts up her head “as Tabor among the mountains, and as Carmel by the sea.” Founded on the Rock of ages, “the gates of hell cannot prevail against her.” “The waters of affliction

may bubble and roar and thunder at her basement, yet everlasting sunshine settles on her brow, and the billows that dash against her only burnish her with their sprays, minister to her radiance, reflect her glory, and proclaim her eternal duration.” Consider,

IV. The prospective glory of the Church. “Fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners, she *looketh forth as the morning.*”

With no deeper joy could weary captive greet his pardon sealed, or sailor homeward bound from stormy seas and lonely watch the brightening coast of father-land, than we the exhilarating vista here spread before us. Morning brandishes his banner in the east, and with his advent the grim shadows disappear as Syria’s haughty host when darting panic-stricken from the Lord. Now relieved, the wan-ning moon, upon whom fell the battle’s brunt, lays aside her armor and seeks the tent of rest, while the heralding con-queror speeds over the vacant fields to complete his triumph and grace the coming of the royal ruler of the day. See! he lifts his magic wand, and instantly the pearly dew upon the rose-tree brightens with diamonds, the shady nooks smile with sweetest flowers, the village spire glistens as though of gold, and the clouds above grow beauteous as the boasted bird of paradise. We have revealed to us the prospect of the Church. She “looketh forth,” not to a long, dreary night, as some would have it, but to a bright millennial day. Ah, ye of little faith, run into the open air of prophecy, and the dull haze of unbelief will be swept from your sin-dimmed vision. See! the tall peaks of prom-ise are already radiant with the coming glory, and dense masses of error-mist roll away in the distance. See! the blades of truth spring up on every side, the flowers and fruit of holiness appear, and the spires of hope gleam red in the moral sky. Hark! it is the voice of the watchman:

“Morning, morning, morning, to Zion!” We have been there, and returned with our faith fixed. Without doubt, the shadows flee away, and an everlasting day dawns upon the Church, which, though sometimes overcast by clouds, shall never be succeeded by a night. Already “the Gentiles come to its light, and kings to the brightness of its rising.” “The gods of earth” tremble and flee at its approach, and the idols are being “cast to the moles and to the bats.”

Brethren, we only would that it were ours to bask under the broad beams of the ascending sun; for, judging from the beauty of the morning rays, what must be the perfect day! But though standing like Moses on the top of Nebo, with the Jordan of death between, we see the promises afar off, and are persuaded by them. We know that the hills of Palestine shall yet reverberate with the songs of believing Jews; we know that the breezes which fan the dense groves where idolatry reigns shall yet waft Immanuel’s name; we know that the streams which gurgle forth from Afric’s weary wastes shall yet listen to the anthem of the redeemed; we know that the mountains which rise amid the pomp and parade of Brahma’s worshipers shall yet echo with temple-notes; we know that the snow and ice of Arctic zones shall yet bloom with beauty and innocence, “the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley;” we know that the cruel citadel of Mohammedanism shall yet be sacked and deserted, and its crescent light extinguished by the glory of the Sun of righteousness; we know that the power of Antichrist shall yet be destroyed, and the angel’s song of triumph be heard: “Babylon the great, is fallen, is fallen, is fallen!” Then will be creation’s jubilee, the Church’s triumph, the Redeemer’s glory! “The Lord will hasten it in his time.” Jealous for his honor, and weary waiting for his stately steppings, we may now and then give

utterance to the plaint, “Why is his chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariot?” But let us “stablish our hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.” Slowness of progress in all that is enduring is the great law of the universe. The creature is impatient, the Creator is deliberate. The creature, whose sum of earthly life is bounded by the three-score years and ten, hurries to and fro in the restlessness of his will; the Creator, sitting in quietude upon his eternal throne, upholdeth all things in the majestic leisureness of unbounded power. “A thousand years in his sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.” Centuries may yet elapse before the smiling prospect seen through the telescope of prophecy is ushered in. But just as certain as the planets revolve around a common center, just as certain as any known fact in nature, the knowledge of God shall encircle and cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. “The zeal of the Lord of hosts shall perform it.” Man and his works not seldom raise expectations that they fail to fulfill, but God, his blessed word and glorious works, never. Yet a little while and a change will come; mightier instruments will be raised up in the Church; fresh and more powerful baptisms will be felt from on high; indifference will be displaced by a tireless concern, and lukewarmness by amazing vigor and zeal; Pentecost will be revived, “and a little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation.” As of old, apostles will go forth, “conquering and to conquer.” Already, as precursors, we have seen the Wesleys, and Whitefield, and others, such as Martyn, and Judson, and Coke. Heralds still more illustrious shall arise—“For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?” “For it shall come to pass that in every place, from the rising of the sun even unto the going

down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered, and a pure offering; for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts."

Soldiers of Christ, to arms! Let the certainty of final success have an inspiring, invigorating effect upon you. The earth is ours by a divine decree; it is ours by certain reversion. Jesus Christ is a stone dropped on the ocean of life, which the angry waves instantly swallowed; but which act, we are certified, is propelling his kingdom in widening circles to the ends of the earth. O to be instrumental in promoting this blessed consummation! Whether indeed we are indolent or active, cowardly or brave, the issue is inevitable. If we will not labor, Christ will find other servants; if we will not fight, we may rest assured there are those who will. *Our* opportunity will be lost, our reward will be forfeited. Other brows will be crowned with laurels, other names will be confessed with honor before an assembled universe. But, brethren, can we endure such a thought? Can we be content to repose in idleness, while others, no better equipped than we, face the foe and win the prize? Up! and by prayer, by faith, by righteousness, by a self-sacrificing benevolence, let us seek to accelerate the universal establishment of our Master's kingdom.

In conclusion. Who is there that would not bear a part in the mighty conflict of which we now speak? Fellow-sinner, I call upon you at this time to enlist in this struggle. Think of its unspeakable sublimity—Marathon and Leuctra dwindle into insignificance before it. Think of the achievements which have already marked it—the deliverance of millions of our race from the cruel captivity of hell. Think of its illustrious dead—martyrs who shrunk not from all the sufferings that cruelty could devise, and who “counted not their own lives dear unto them so that they might

finish their course with joy." Think of its unseen spectators—the "cloud of witnesses" who surround us, angels from their thrones of splendor, and demons from their seats of woe. Think of the "Captain of our salvation," he "whom the armies of heaven follow, and who hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords." Think, too, of the reward which he offers, a reward brilliant beyond thought, measureless as eternity. Refuse us not. Now abandon your rebellion, now join our blood-besprinkled bands, now help us storm the strongholds of Satan. Soon from every hill-top shall float the banner of the cross; soon through every dark valley shall reverberate the trump of Messiah's gospel; soon the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, and deserts rejoice and blossom as the rose; soon from all nations, and peoples, and kindreds, and tongues, shall ascend the sublime acclamation: "Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!"

SERMON XXII.

THE STONE AND ITS DESTINY

“Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them; and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.” (Daniel ii. 34, 35.)

NEBUCHADNEZZAR, in the course of his reign, had two remarkable dreams. The first, as explained by the prophet, is one of the most encouraging visions recorded in Scripture. It gives, under impressive symbols, an outline of the history of our world from the time of the Babylonish monarch to the complete and universal establishment of the kingdom of Christ. “Asleep upon his bed,” the king saw, with the inner eye of his soul, an image of colossal size. This image, we learn, represented the four great monarchies which should bear rule in succession over the civilized world, and also the minor kingdoms which should come into existence on the termination of the last of these monarchies. The head of gold denoted the Babylonish empire; the silver breast and arms, the Medo-Persian; the brazen body and loins, the Greco-Macedonian; the iron legs, the Roman; and the feet and toes—part of iron and part of clay—the ten kingdoms which succeeded the Roman power, and which comprise to-day the greater portion of modern Europe. While the king was gazing on the image, awed by its terribleness, yet fascinated by its splendor, his attention was attracted to a singular operation—a stone was cut out of a mountain without hands.

No sooner was the stone detached than it began to roll through the air, impelled by no outward force. As he watched it he saw that its course was toward the imposing image. On, on it sped, pausing not in its career, nor swerving for a moment from the directness of its aim. With terrific force it smote the image upon its feet, which were of iron and clay. Instantly the image was shivered into pieces, and its fragments borne away by the winds of heaven. And now the stone, as though instinct with life, expands and grows. It becomes a great mountain, and fills the whole earth. According to Daniel, this stone represents the kingdom of God—in other words, the Christian religion.

Three facts respecting Christianity are brought to view by the history of the stone.

I. Its supernatural origin. “The stone was cut out of the mountain without hands.”

The religion of Christ is evidently divine. It is not a creation of human genius, nor the enactment of human power. It was an emanation from the mind of God; an expression of his will and pleasure in regard to our race; a system of recovery designed to deliver us from the bondage and corruption of sin, and to bestow on us the liberty of the sons of God. Numerous have been the efforts to explain, on natural principles, the origin of Christianity; but such efforts have been futile, they have been like the fretting of waves against the majestic rock that looks down unmoved, even when they assume their most threatening aspect. Look at the central figure of this system—He who, though invisible, wields the scepter and governs the progress of this kingdom. We have the record of his life in the four Gospels. One of two hypotheses is inevitable: either such a person as Jesus of Nazareth really lived on earth, or the evangelists gave form and life to a mere idea which never had an outward embodiment, and existed no-

where but in their own minds. On the supposition that he existed as described, his divine personality cannot be denied. That his life was ideal is beyond the range of rational belief. It would have been utterly impossible for the evangelists, living in the age they did, surrounded by the influences they were, with their slender acquirements and native prejudices, to have conceived such a character as Jesus Christ. Such a conception, under such circumstances, would have been as great a miracle as any they relate. Christ is an absolutely perfect character. Grant him to be what the evangelists proclaim him to be—Deity incarnate—and in no relation which he sustains, in no situation in which he is placed, in no act which he performs, in no disposition which he reveals, in no word which he utters, can you detect the slightest moral obliquity. Which is the most reasonable—to believe that this marvelous life was the invention of a few obscure Jews, or that it was the record of what was actually seen? the photograph of one who walked our earth, breathed its air, gazed upon its landscapes, felt its sorrows, and labored to remove its curse? Look at the substance of his teachings, as given in the Gospels and expanded in the Epistles. Are not his doctrines stamped with the impress of divinity? You cannot study them carefully and without bias, bearing in mind the wants and aspirations of humanity, without being convinced of the truth of St. Paul's affirmation: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son." Man would know something of himself—Christ teaches the existence of the soul, its dignity, its accountability, and its immortality. Man would know something of God—Christ teaches his spirituality, his unity, his ubiquity, his omnipotence, his wisdom, his purity, and his love. Man, conscious of his separation from God, would

know how he may be reconciled—Christ teaches that he himself is the medium of approach, and that by his sufferings and death, which were an all-sufficient sacrifice for sin, a way has been opened by which sinners may be brought into a state of acceptance and fellowship with God. Who else has shed such light on these difficult but momentous questions? Socrates and Plato, Confucius, Buddha, Zoroaster, Mohammed, how are their sayings thrown into eclipse by the utterances of the Man of Nazareth! May we not put the question which was propounded by his cotemporaries—"Whence hath this man this wisdom?" Jesus, except in his childhood, was never beyond the limits of Palestine. His home was in the midst of a rural, unlettered, and degraded population; he had access to no famous schools; he was unassisted by the patronage of the wise or the great; the most of his life was spent in manual labor at a carpenter's bench; his ministry lasted but three years; he was only thirty-three when he was crucified. Under such conditions the question forces itself upon us and challenges an answer, "Whence hath this man this wisdom?" Whence, but from the hidden yet overflowing fountain of his Godhead? Look at the influence of Christianity wherever it has been embraced. "The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power." In the beautiful language of Isaiah, it has "opened rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys." It has clothed many a moral waste with the beauties of holiness, and caused it to resound with the voice of salvation; it has cheered the captive in his dungeon, and the widow in her poverty, and the dying in his agony; it has rescued the sensualist from the tyranny of his lusts, evoked the noblest kindness from the frozen breast of avarice, and constrained the lawless to sobriety and the pursuit of virtue; it has softened the antipathies of nations, given wings to the feet of philanthrop-

py, and inspired the hope of millennial glory. What have other systems done in comparison with this? Go where Buddhism reigns, go where the False Prophet can number his votaries, go where Christianity is not, and what see you but degradation and misery? The religion of Christ, considered in its influence as well as its discourses, must be acknowledged to be divine. It surpasses all human invention. It never could have been formulated by the human brain and heart of any age. The stone was quarried by none other than the hands of the "mighty God of Israel." It is both "the power of God and the wisdom of God."

The history of the stone as descriptive of Christianity teaches,

II. Its irresistible might. "Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors, and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them."

That Christianity, though of divine origin, would encounter opposition, is assumed by the antagonism between the stone and the image. That this opposition would be protracted and formidable is to be inferred from the fact that the image included in symbol the chief political powers of ancient and modern times. The opposition indeed reaches back to a period anterior to the time of the vision; it began with Cain, who was the first to show his hostility to the Divine method of saving mankind; and it has raged with more or less violence down to the present. The image naturally suggests a consideration of the opposition which has marked the different empires and kingdoms it represents. Take the Babylonish empire—the head of gold.

You see Nebuchadnezzar striving to establish a world-wide idolatry, which if successful would have left no room for the introduction of any other religious system. Take the Medo-Persian empire—the breast and arms of silver. You see Haman plotting to extirpate the whole Jewish race—that race from which should come “the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel.” Take the Greco-Macedonian empire—the body and thighs of brass. You see Antiochus Epiphanes, like Nebuchadnezzar, seeking to paganize the whole world—not indeed by the establishment of one uniform idolatry, but by the extinction of all worship of the true God. Take the Roman empire—the legs of iron. As iron is the hardest of all metals, so the opposition became more intense and determined.

The stone which had been preparing for centuries is now detached from the mountain and launched on its sublime and beneficent career. Apostles and evangelists go forth proclaiming salvation through the blood of a crucified Saviour; but enemies confront them at every step. They have to contend with the fierce prejudice of the Jews, the tyranny of emperors, the treachery of false friends, the malice of priesthoods, the popular but illusive reasonings of philosophers, the pomp and splendor of heathen rituals, and the passions of an ignorant and immoral people. Take the ten kingdoms which succeeded the Roman empire—the toes, part of iron and part of clay. They are held together in their opposition by the feet. That the feet are not spoken of as representing a secular kingdom, but are considered in connection with the toes, is singular. They certainly perform an important office in keeping the toes of the image in place; and we notice, moreover, that it is the feet which receive the fatal blow inflicted by the stone. This silence is significant. We are led to look for something answering to the feet; and we have it in those false

systems of religion which have their center in the capitals of the two great divisions of the Roman empire—the eastern and the western—Constantinople and Rome. Take the most formidable of these—the papacy, a direct offshoot of the Roman empire, its seat the ancient metropolis of that empire. We see an organization which can scarcely be called a kingdom, yet wielding a sway vaster and more powerful than any kingdom, and as such waging war against the Christian system, and by its influence holding together for centuries the foremost of the European kingdoms in their opposition to the gospel. That we do not err in identifying the papacy in part with the feet is evident from a parallel vision given by Daniel in a subsequent chapter of his prophecies. The four great empires are there described under the figure of four great beasts. The fourth beast is generally admitted to stand for the Roman empire. This beast had at first ten horns, which represented the ten kingdoms which should spring up on the subversion of the Roman empire. Soon another horn appears, weak at first, but in a short time taking precedence over all the rest. Three horns are plucked up before it—meaning, perhaps, the utter subjection of three of the kingdoms to the will of this new power. In this last horn were “eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things.” He whom it represents, it is said, “shall speak great words against the Most High, and think to change time and laws.” Few of our most thoughtful commentators have failed to see in this horn a description of the papacy. It fitly denotes the proud assumptions and swelling blasphemies, the mighty influence and persecuting spirit, of that system. As the one horn among its fellows, subjecting some and lording it over others, so in the earlier vision the feet are seen controlling the toes, and utilizing their strength, whether of iron or clay, in opposition to the stone. In the one vision

it is the smiting of the feet by the stone which is the prelude to the entire destruction of the image, and in the other vision it is said of the horn: "It made war with the saints, and prevailed against them, until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the Most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom." In the feet, therefore, we see the same enemy to Christianity that we see in the horn. It is to be observed that the feet and toes are described as part of iron and part of clay. This denotes that their opposition will be at times strong as iron, and again weak as potter's clay. The accuracy of this description is confirmed by history. Ever since their formation there has been more or less opposition to Christianity in every kingdom in Europe, an opposition which is due directly or indirectly to the false systems by which they are controlled. In some kingdoms the opposition has been longer and fiercer than in others. The iron has predominated in France, Italy, and Spain; the potter's clay in Germany, Great Britain, and Holland. The feet—the religion of Mohammed, and the Greek and Romish Churches—still hold the governments of Europe, by their traditions or doctrines, in opposition to the gospel. Even in England it is seen in the existence of an Established Church—an idea of popish origin, and which in the case of the Non-conformists, and recently of the Wesleyan Methodists, gives proof of its intolerance of the worship of God in primitive simplicity. In the interpretation of the feet and toes, Daniel intimates that attempts will be made to combine the iron and clay into one homogeneous mass in opposition to the stone. He says, "They shall mingle themselves with the seed of men." By "the seed of men" we understand human legislation. It is the word of man, in contradistinction to the word of God, "the incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth forever." "The kings

of the earth shall set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed." But their union will be of short duration; "they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay." Influences will be at work dissolving their alliances and annulling their decrees. They will, for the most part, act independently of each other, showing alternately the strength of the iron and the weakness of the clay. This is now no longer prophecy, but existing fact. While the image thus discloses the opposition which Christianity must encounter, the stone reveals to us its irresistible might. "The stone smote the image upon his feet which were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces." We are not to infer from this that there had been no previous collisions. The vision only describes the last and decisive blow; other collisions are implied. The stone struck the head of gold in the days of Nebuchadnezzar, when, rather than acquiesce in the establishment of a world-wide idolatry, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego permitted themselves to be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. The stone struck the silver breast and arms in the days of Ahasuerus, when at the peril of her life Esther stood up against the murderous Haman, and defeated his cruel purpose of destroying the Jewish nation, and with it the holy seed. The stone struck the body and thighs of brass in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes, when the brave Maccabees consecrated themselves to the preservation of the worship of the true God. The stone struck the legs of iron in the days of the Roman emperors, when, at the preaching of the apostles and their successors, temples fell, idols were abolished, philosophies superseded, and the name of Jehovah magnified by millions. The stone has struck the feet and the toes, and its resonant clash has been heard, as in the person of Luther it fell upon the iron; and again in Wesley, on the potter's clay.

But these are only preliminary strokes. The success attending them was only partial and incomplete. The grand, final stroke remains to be given. And can we doubt that it will be given after witnessing what the stone has already accomplished? When that stroke shall fall we cannot say; we feel satisfied, however, that it cannot be far off. It is true there are signs of increasing vitality in the feet—Mohammedanism and the false Churches of the East and West; and we shall not be surprised if papacy at least regains some of its olden power before there shall descend upon it the last terrific blow. This will be in accordance with Scripture, which declares that “the day of Christ shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.” But whether near or distant, the blow is in reserve; it will descend at last with crushing violence; the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure; when, as consequent on the destruction of the feet, “the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, shall be broken to pieces together, and become as the chaff of the summer threshing-floors; and the wind shall carry them away, that no place shall be found for them.”

We are not to conclude from this that all national distinctions and civil rule will terminate with the triumph of Christianity. Human governments, apart from their abuse, have the sanction and approval of Jehovah. “The powers that be” are said to be “ordained of God;” and the law of the gospel is that he that resisteth them “resisteth the ordinance of God.” In the poetic description of the millennial Church given by St. John, the nations are represented as walking in the light of it, and the kings of the earth as bringing “their glory and honor into it.”

The annihilation of the image denotes the extinction of all opposition to Christianity on the part of the chief polit-

ical powers of the world. It refers particularly to the kingdoms of Europe—the ten toes which shall be in existence at the time of the smiting of the feet. These kingdoms have inherited the authority which was wielded successively by the gold, the silver, the brass, and the iron—the Babylonish, Persian, Macedonian, and Roman powers. With the destruction of the feet—the reign and influence of the false systems which dominate in Eastern and Western Europe—all their authority will be given to the furtherance of the gospel. They will be no longer controlled by selfishness, jealousy, pride, hatred, or superstition. They will exist only to subserve and promote the interests of Christ.

The history of the stone, as descriptive of Christianity, teaches,

III. Its final supremacy. “The stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.”

With the elimination of every opposing element from the governments of Europe, and the consecration of the millions of their subjects to the spread of Christianity, the conversion of the world must inevitably follow. The influence of Europe enlisted without reserve on the side of Christianity would give it such ascendancy in the minds of heathen nations as would lead them at once to renounce their idolatries and embrace the worship of the true God. The hour of that ascendancy is coming! The stone shall become a great mountain, and fill the whole earth! Yes, a great mountain! It shall tower high over the thrones of kings; princes shall rule in righteousness and judge with equity. It shall tower high over the marts of commerce; there shall no more be seen “the wicked balances and the bag of deceitful weights.” It shall tower high over the walks of literature; the student shall no more be annoyed with the rantings of a skeptical philosophy, nor seduced by the bland whisperings of a specious sensualism. It shall tower

high over the social circle; other standards and maxims shall be adopted; "the vile person shall no more be called liberal, nor the churl said to be bountiful." It shall tower high over the avocations of life; its presence shall be seen in the humblest spheres; "in that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, holiness unto the Lord; and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar."

The stone shall become a great mountain, and fill the whole earth. It shall be found on every continent and in every zone. It shall rise amid the Western wilds, upon the snows of the far North, in the heart of Africa, above the teeming districts of China and Japan, and in the remotest islands of the sea.

And the stone shall be enduring; the kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom; "it shall not be left to other people, but it shall stand forever."

Glorious consummation! How should it cheer and encourage us as Christians in our conflict with evil! The image still stands, and flings its dark shadow over the largest portions of the globe. The stone yet seems small and insignificant; there are voices that insinuate its insufficiency; but let us take courage from the final issue as made known in this vision. Strong and colossal as is the form opposed to it, the stone triumphs; the image is shivered, and not a fragment is left as a memento of its existence. Things are not always what they seem. An unseen arm propels the stone, and that arm is the arm of the Eternal God. "He shall not fail, nor be discouraged, till he hath set judgment in the earth; and the isles shall wait for his law."

A word of warning. Do not oppose the progress of the stone. All opposition is useless and vain. The stone is destined to triumph; no human hand can stop it. You

may dam up a river, but its waters rising shall wash over your obstructions, and with increased volume roll onward to the sea. It is thus with Christianity. From Celsus down to Tom Paine, from Julian and Nero down to the persecutors of Madagascar, men have sought to impede or turn back the gospel; but it has risen triumphantly above the barriers of their wrath; and while they sleep in dishonored or forgotten graves, it is rolling on in crystal clearness and with a swifter speed to the ocean of millennial glory. Opposition is not only vain, but perilous. The stone you withstand is endowed with divine strength. "Hast thou an arm like God?" "Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."

SERMON XXIII.

OUR LORD'S CONDESCENSION TO SINNERS.

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." (Rev. iii. 20.)

THE style of Scripture, like that of all Oriental compositions, is to a considerable extent pictorial. Certainly such a style is by far the most impressive, and is highly proper in the exhibition of truths which are in themselves thrilling or sublime. In our text this style is used with evident effect. The design is to illustrate the work of man's salvation. A homely picture is selected, which, nevertheless, is exceedingly appropriate, and arrests the mind as by a sudden spell. A house looms up before us, the door of which is closed. The house represents the human heart. A friend is at the door, knocking for admission. He has been knocking long; but although his "head is filled with dew, and his locks with the drops of night," he is knocking still. This friend is Jesus. Admission is desired with the view of administering relief to the uncivil but impoverished and wretched inmate. This relief denotes salvation.

But to profit by the picture we must give it more than a passing glance. Let us then devote a few moments to the contemplation of the house of the human heart. We will consider it under three aspects: as closed, as sought, as blessed.

I. The heart closed. Closed against Christ, closed against salvation.

1. *It is sometimes closed by inconsideration.*

We are naturally unmindful of our true interest and duty. Salvation can alone satisfy the wants of our im-

mortal nature; only Jesus can bestow the inestimable gift; and yet, to human shame, the complaint goes sounding down the ages: "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." "Sporting themselves with their own deceivings," gives in epitome the life-labor of many. Pleasure woos, and though they have been told, that there is poison beneath the siren tongue, and death in her dreamy smile—regardless of danger—they yield themselves up to her potent sway. Wealth invites, and though they have been warned that "the love of money is the root of all evil," and that "they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare," self-confident and proud they bow down to the golden shrine. Honor calls, and though they have been assured that her temple is situated on a stormy peak, is hard to attain, and when attained one knows not but some unsuspected avalanche or inconsiderate step may plunge him into ignominy, defiantly they crowd up the shining steep. Meanwhile the claims of religion are overlooked. "Wisdom crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets; she crieth in the chief places of concourse; in the opening of the gates; in the city she uttereth her words, saying, How long ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity?" But her appeal is lost in the babble of conflicting voices. Rarely do thoughts of a serious character find ingress to the mind. If any such effect an entrance they are as unwelcome intruders, disturbers of sweet slumber and pleasant dreams. "Avaunt, grim phantoms! let our joy be unmixed!" is the cry of the votaries of earth. "Merry to-day, to-morrow we die!" the opiate with which they soothe an uneasy conscience. And thus reckless and obstinate, with a Saviour at their side, and salvation within reach, they speed to their fate "as a fly to a candle, or as a drunkard to a fight." O inconsideration, what thousands hast

thou ruined! Could we for a moment draw aside the veil and view thy victims in their torment—could we catch a glimpse of them as they now toss on burning billows, and hear them as they wildly deplore the mad folly which brought them to their doom—surely the wail of Anathoth's priest would go leaping from our lips: “O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!”

2. The heart is sometimes closed by prejudice.

The Nazarene and his doctrines have never been popular with men. Adverse opinions have been formed respecting them, and handed down like so many heir-looms, from generation to generation. It would be difficult to enumerate all the alleged grounds of objection. Prejudice has been conceived against religion because of the duties it imposes. As might be expected, the carnal mind has no taste for such exercises as prayer and thanksgiving, and no relish for such requirements as meekness and temperance, self-denial and systematic benevolence. Prejudice has arisen because of the hypocrisy of many religious professors. It is indeed to be regretted that such hypocrisy exists, but it ought never to be forgotten that the existence of counterfeit by no means proves the non-existence of genuine coin. Prejudice has also arisen on the ground that godliness is calculated to throw a gloom over the spirit, and render life a burden and misery; whereas, if the Scripture be consulted, and if the testimony of thousands may be relied on, piety is an angel of mercy sent to cheer the heart in its loneliness, and fling rainbows of hope over all the misfortunes of time. Unreasonable as such prejudice is, it is nevertheless exceedingly difficult to remove; men cling to it with a drowning man's tenacity. Few are quick to detect their error. Many live for years—yea, often till life's close—mistaking mere feeling

for facts, and the results of whims and personal idiosyncrasies for the conclusions of a healthy and vigorous understanding. Prejudice is always more or less proud. Those who are its victims are often found lauding their infirmity as though they deemed it a sign of peculiar strength. Prejudice is seldom able to see any good in that which it condemns. Like a vapor, it dims the aspect of things; like colored glass, it disguises them. Verily a no mean foe is prejudice. Satan cannot reckon on a warmer ally in his dark and vengeful work. Prejudice kept the Jewish nation from owning and receiving the Redeemer. Prejudice steeled the hearts of the heathen against the early evangelists, kindled the torch and fired the stake when so many suffered martyrdom. Prejudice opposed our modern reformers, often made their words to fall like spent arrows to the ground, and brought from them the tearful lament, "Who hath believed our report?" And alas! to-day prejudice is one of the chief barriers to the progress of the truth, and to the universal reign of the Messiah.

3. *The Saviour is sometimes excluded from the heart by presumption.*

In religious as well as in secular matters, it is common for men to be "wise in their own conceit." Here, as elsewhere, pride of understanding is their delight and bane. On their own fallible judgment they are disposed to rely in preference to the revealed will of God; and often they do so to their everlasting regret.

Presumption, as opposed to Christ, displays itself in various ways. Many presume that they have no need of the blessing that he brings them. This was the sin and ultimate ruin of the Laodiceans, to whom our text was primarily addressed. They boasted that they were "rich and increased with goods, and had need of nothing; and knew not that they were wretched, and miserable, and poor, and

blind, and naked." Others, admitting their need of salvation, presume to seek it independently of Christ. "Being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, they submit not to the righteousness of God." A still larger number, acknowledging their need of salvation, and regarding Christ as the sole dispenser of this grace, presume postponing its acceptance until some future period. They know their duty, but they do it not. "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee," is their response to the messenger of mercy. Alas! the "convenient season," so fondly counted on, seldom comes. Lured on by the fleet-ing but fascinating vanities around them, they observe not time's rapid flight; and while still absorbed in fresh schemes of worldly enterprise and aggrandizement, they are summoned to answer for their presumption at the bar of an offended God. "Thus," in the language of another, "they make a bridge of their own shadow, and so perish in the waves." We proceed to consider,

II. The heart sought. Sought by Christ, sought that it may be saved. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock."

This visit is characterized by three important features.

1. *By the most amazing condescension.* "Behold, I stand."

Ask you who it is that thus stands at the door of the hu-man heart? It is no other than the King eternal, immor-tal, invisible. It is He who, in the greatness of his power, laid the foundations of the earth and clothed it with beauty like a garment. It is He who stretcheth forth the heavens as a curtain, who calleth the stars by name, bringing forth Mazaroth in his season, and guiding Arcturus with his sons. It is He whom angels praise to harp-notes, breath-ing, "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for-ever and ever!" Such is the Person who presents himself a suppliant at the door of the sinner's heart.

2. This visit is further characterized *by the most unwearied patience*. "Behold, I stand."

It might have been supposed that when once denied admission to the heart, incensed at the indifference and ingratitude displayed, the heavenly visitor would instantly depart. To our relief we find that "his thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are his ways our ways. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his ways higher than our ways, and his thoughts than our thoughts." "The Lord is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." His patience is his glory; he numbers it among his noblest attributes; he points to it as among the brightest jewels in the crown of love. "And Moses said, I beseech thee, show me thy glory." And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed: "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, *long-suffering*, and abundant in goodness and truth." In the estimation of the Saviour, if not of its possessor, the soul is of incalculable value. He shed his precious blood that he might save it; he endured the eclipse of his Father's face that on it might not descend the mist of darkness forever. It is his by the twofold titles of creation and redemption. He visits it that he may beautify and bless it. It has become a den of anarchy and shame; it is hateful and hating, deceiving and being deceived; vile affections dwell there; voices proceed from it: "Who is the Almighty, that we should serve him?" "Cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us!" The Saviour would cleanse it from its defilement, and uplift it from its debasement; he would make it a palace, a temple. Stripping it of its idols, he would invest it with adornments more beauteous than the hues of flowers, more dazzling than the robes of angels; he would reign in it, making it his throne, and filling it with the coruscations of indwelling Deity. Unwelcomed,

his authority denied, his love spurned, he turns not away from it abruptly and in anger—he “*stands.*” Full well he knows the fate which must befall it if finally abandoned. He has no pleasure in its reprobation and destruction; hence he lingers, and haply it may hearken to his admonitions and entreaties. Oft, when wearied by its obstinacy, his step is lifted to depart, “his heart is turned within him, his repentings are kindled together,” and lengthening his stay, he renews his solicitations, sighing: “How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel?” O marvelous forbearance! Where in all the range of vision shall we find its equal? Were one of us to be denied admission to some humble dwelling that we had visited with purposes of love, quickly would we resent the insult and take our final leave. But here, not hour after hour only, but day after day, and month after month—ay, often till the sinner’s head is hoary and his heart a noisome sepulcher—the Saviour stands, soliciting admission.

3. This visit is characterized *by the most persistent effort.* “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock.”

Real love is not simply sentimental, but practical. The Saviour’s love is emphatically “in deed and in truth.” Knowing the importance of gaining access to the heart, he employs every means available to that end, save what would directly interfere with the freedom of the will. He appeals to the heart by the ministry of his word. “Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?” As it falls on the ear, imbued with the Spirit’s power, it strikes judgment and conscience and will, and rings through all the chambers of the soul. Its awful threatenings alarm and terrify, while its gracious promises soften and invite. “O sinner!” it cries, “wherefore art thou thus intrenched in thy wickedness? is it not the will of thy Creator that thou shouldst be renewed

in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness? Wherefore then art thou disobedient to his will? Arise, call upon thy God. Who hath hardened himself against him and prospered? Woe to him that striveth with his Maker!" But lest the sinner despair and harden himself in iniquity, it changes its voice and addresses him in other tones. Strains of melody, sweet as from blessed spirits uttering praise, float upon his ear: "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." But to make his word the more effective the Saviour seconds it by dispensations of his providence. The sinner is blessed, perhaps, with temporal prosperity; the horn of plenty pours its rich treasures into his lap; health paints its rose on his cheek and darts its luster into his eyes; friends troop around him, anxious to outdo each other in offices of love. To him life is a gay summer scene with fragrant meadows and laughing streamlets, loitering breezes and cloudless skies. All this is intended to melt his heart in gratitude to Him from whom proceedeth every good and perfect gift, and to prompt him to present himself a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is his reasonable service. It may be that the sinner is stretched on a bed of sickness. It was but yesterday that he was busy conning his ledger or superintending his field; now, feeble and in pain, he finds himself borne steadily forward to the confines of the grave. Fear seizes him as an awful future, unlighted by a solitary ray, looms close at hand. He cries aloud for mercy; he implores God to spare him, promising, vowing, that if he will but raise him up he will open to him his heart, and enthrone him as its King. The Lord

hears him ; he rises from that bed of suffering and anticipated death, and speedily regains his former strength. O what a loud, startling knock was that ! Sinner, has it been in vain ?

It may be that a different providence is employed. The blight of bereavement falls on your home ; some loved one is taken away—a son, we may suppose. How you doted on that lad ! what high hopes you entertained of his future ! with what delight you gazed on his beaming countenance and expressive eye ! Like a sweet dream he has fled. How difficult it was to realize your loss ! How drear you felt as you stood at the grave's mouth and saw his remains committed to kindred dust ! How still more sad as on returning to your home you marked the vacant chair, the gap at the table or fireside, the silence no longer broken by a voice of musical flow ! Ah ! in that solemn hour, when thoughts of death and judgment, of duty and responsibility, came thronging on your mind, heard you not a whisper, soft, clear, penetrating—"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock?"

"Lo all these things worketh God oftentimes with man, to bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living." Consider,

III. The heart blessed. Blessed by Christ, blessed with salvation. "If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

The Laodiceans, to whom the words were originally addressed, were a commercial people. Their city was noted for its wealth, its woolen manufactures, its ointments and cosmetics. The thoroughfare of numerous caravans on their way from the East, it was no uncommon thing for its citizens to hear the voice of venders in the streets, inviting their attention and offering to supply their wants. Proud

as they were of the products of their own looms and laboratories, such appeals would often be in vain. It is a fine conception of a popular writer, that our Saviour here represents himself as a traveling merchant, the head of one of those caravans so familiar to the people of Laodicea. As such he wends his way through their midst, exhibiting his precious wares, and calling them to come forth from their dwellings, examine, and purchase. In tones of solemn warning he reproves their self-sufficiency, and apprises them of their real want. "Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." With melting compassion he urges them to seize the present opportunity to provide for their future and eternal welfare. "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see." It is in vain—the sternest admonition and the gentlest entreaty are alike unheeded. The evening shades are gathering, and to-morrow he must depart. He is loath to leave without one more effort to persuade the thoughtless and incredulous. A few hours remain, and these, by denying himself of rest, he can dedicate to this work of love. Retracing his steps, he proceeds through the deepening gloom from house to house, and from door to door, exclaiming, while knocking loudly and importunately at each: "If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me!"

We will briefly notice the blessings which Christ imparts to the soul that receives him.

1. *There is pardon.*

This is "the gold tried in the fire," the spiritual coin

which has been submitted to the test of infinite rectitude, and which shows upon its surface the stamp of the Divine countenance. To possess this gold is to be "rich," for it relieves of moral disability, and is the source of a peace which passeth understanding, and such as the world, with its untold treasures, is incapable of giving. Sinner, have you never sighed for forgiveness? Have you never longed to be delivered from the entail of guilt, and to be enriched with a sense of your acceptance with God? You may be forgiven. "The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins." He now stands at the door of your heart. Hear you not his pleading voice—"O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thy help?" Call upon him while he is near; welcome him to your heart; embrace him with all the strength and fervor of your affections. The instant you receive him that instant you are forgiven; you know at once "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, that you through his poverty might be rich."

2. Another blessing which Christ bestows is *purity*.

This is the "white raiment" which is to clothe us—our need and our adornment. This snowy vestment was lost to us by the fall, and can only be restored by Christ. Our own righteousness, laud it as we may, is but as filthy rags; it is torn and defiled by pride and selfishness; it may please us while immersed in moral darkness, but as soon as a ray of the true light falls upon it, we shudder at its hideousness. The glistering robe which Christ gives is the work of his Holy Spirit. It consists of those virtues which are the constituent parts of a perfect character; it is "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." Sinner, would you not be holy? O the blessedness of those who have "put off the old man, which is corrupt, and have put on the new man, which after God

is created in righteousness and true holiness!" This glorious dress may be yours; you have but to admit that Saviour who stands at the door of your heart, to be clothed in "raiment of needlework" redolent with "myrrh and aloes and cassia," and which no effort or ingenuity of your own could possibly provide.

3. Still another blessing to be derived from Christ is *the promise of eternal life*.

This is the "eye-salve" with which he anoints our vision, and discloses a future which would otherwise be uncertain or unknown. Here we are surrounded by the fleeting and the perishable; flowers bloom, but fade; forests wave in stately pride, but soon decay and fall; on dome and spire, on pyramid and palace, on all the monuments of human might and skill, is written change. Nothing is enduring. We ourselves, the glory of creation, die and crumble into dust. There is hope, however, for the sons of men. "Our Saviour, Jesus Christ, hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." He not only reveals to us our natural immortality, but promises to believers an eternity of joy in the presence of his Father. O the rich vista of delight which he unfolds to all who by faith receive him! It is undimmed by tears, it is undarkened by a solitary grief! It is boundless, it is indescribable! "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." But "glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God!" There crowns will forever flash upon our brows; there palms will forever glitter in our hands; there songs will forever warble from our lips. Such are some of the blessings with which Christ favors the soul that receives him. Sinner, is not that heart blessed, unspeakably blessed, that has welcomed such a Saviour?

And now let me ask: Will you not accede to his solicitations? You best show your appreciation of his love by prompt obedience to his commands. For long years, perhaps, he has stood at the door of your heart; many a knock has he given, with the hope that you would admit him; his mercies have been showered upon you, and in a voice sweeter than Dorian notes he has wooed you; his judgments have smitten you, and in tones like the rumbling of thunder he has warned you; your own conscience has risen up within you, and sternly rebuked you. And will you persist in your folly? Will you still refuse to admit the Divine Suppliant who stands at the door of your heart?

A lady once told me that she was unable to sleep a whole night for having turned away a poor woman from her door just before retiring to rest. And can you be so lost to a sense of your duty and obligation—*so dead*—as to sleep at night, should you refuse the Saviour admission to your heart? O were some prince of a long and lofty line, traversing this land of ours, to pause at your dwelling and solicit your hospitality, how welcome would he be! Yet Jesus comes to you; Jesus, before whom all earthly kings are vanity; Jesus, whom princely seraphim attend, whom angels laud and magnify, and of whom all nature sings; Jesus, who loves you, and who died for you; he comes to you, and with scarred hand—the hand which was pierced for your sake—knocks at the door of your heart; and shall he come in vain?

In the silent midnight watches,
List—thy bosom door!
How it knocketh, knocketh, knocketh,
Knocketh evermore!
Say not 'tis thy pulse's beating;
'T is thy heart of sin;
'T is thy Saviour knocks and crieth,
"Rise, and let me in!"

Death comes on with reckless footsteps,
 To the hall and hut;
Think you death will tarry knocking,
 When the door is shut?
Jesus waiteth, waiteth, waiteth,
 But the door is fast!
Grieved, away thy Saviour goeth;
 Death breaks in at last!

Then 't is thine to stand entreating
 Christ to let thee in;
At the gate of heaven beating,
 Wailing for thy sin.
Nay, alas, thou guilty creature!
 Hast thou then forgot?
Jesus waited long to know thee,
 Now he knows thee not.

SERMON XXIV

THE TEACHINGS OF THE GREAT MOUNTAINS.

“Thy righteousness is like the great mountains.” (Ps. xxxvi. 6.)

WHILE traveling through the mountains, surveying with admiration and delight their grandeur and beauty, the words of the text kept recurring to my mind —“Thy righteousness is like the great mountains.” I had often read the passage, without giving it any special attention, but now it came home to my heart with a force and significance which to me it had never before possessed.

The psalmist evidently saw an analogy between “the righteousness” of God and “the great mountains.” Wherein is the likeness? In what respects is “the righteousness” of God like “the great mountains?” The mountains are elevated. This is the first point of resemblance which strikes us.

To a person whose life has been passed in a level country, whose eye has glanced only on plains, unrelieved by a single lofty eminence, the first view of mountains is the occasion of profound wonder. He may have gazed upon the towering works of man, upon cities with their palaces and temples, their domes and spires; but all suffer an eclipse, all sink into insignificance before these stupendous monuments of the handiwork of God.

Never shall I forget the surprise and pleasure with which I have gazed upon mountains as they blushed in the rays of the morning sun. Never shall I forget the fascination which has held me as I have seen them aglow with the gold and the purple of departing day. There are mountains so tall that their summits are covered with perpetual snow. What a sight must be the Alps or the Andes with their

white peaks piercing the blue heavens! An Arabian poet writing of Lebanon says: "He bears winter on his head, spring on his shoulders, and autumn in his bosom, while summer lies sleeping at his feet." Like these tall mountains is the righteousness of God. It is unrivaled by any attainment of his creatures. It soars far above the purity of the purest man, far above the rectitude of the holiest angel. The atmosphere of a room may seem clear, but a ray of light darting through it reveals innumerable particles of dust; so in the light of the Divine countenance the holiness of finite beings will ever show a want of absolute perfection. Job was perfect and upright, one that feared God and eschewed evil; and yet when addressing the Deity, he says: "Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee?" Isaiah was a prophet; and yet, when he saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, he cried: "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips." The angels are "ministers" of God that "do his pleasure;" and yet, veiling their faces with their wings in token of their unworthiness, they cry, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts!" There are men who dare arraign the righteousness of God, who deny the integrity of his character, who question the justice of his providence, who find fault with his dealings with his creatures; but such are answered by the psalmist in the words of our text: "Thy righteousness is like the great mountains." It is high, and the mysteries which it assumes to some but proves its exceeding loftiness and the dimness and inadequacy of their vision.

There is another fact respecting "the great mountains" which finds its parallel in "the righteousness of God." The mountains are found on every continent and in every zone. It is not only in America that they lift their tall forms above the horizon; they are found in the wilds of Africa, they rise amid the cultivated plains of Europe,

they extend over the vast territory of Asia, and they loom up amid the islands of the deep. Like the mountains, the righteousness of God is not confined to a solitary section ; it is to be seen in every part of his mighty empire. It is visible in the life of every individual, in the history of every family, in the development of every nation, in the destiny of every order of created intelligence, in the frame-work of every star that glitters in immensity.

You may have seen a man poor, friendless, and lying upon a bed of sickness. With a look of doubt you ask, "Is the righteousness of God here?" We answer, "Yes." If the sufferer is a depraved sinner, one living in rebellion against God, his misery is less than he deserves. But his troubles are corrective as well as punitive; they are designed to arrest him in his career of wickedness, and to lead him to reflection and repentance before it shall be too late. If the man is a saint, his trials are instruments of spiritual growth, sharp strokes from the great Master-hand, intended to fashion him into a nearer resemblance to Deity ; a brief winter-time of cold and snow, to be followed by a glad summer-time of everlasting fruitage. "Our light affliction," says St. Paul, by way of comfort to believers—"Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." But you point to a nation groaning under terrible calamities—it is wasted by famine, it is decimated by war. You ask, "Is the righteousness of God here?" "Yes," we reply. National calamity is often the result of national crime. Nations, if judged at all, must be judged in the present life. As God is slow to anger and of great mercy, in the case of nations as well as individuals, one generation may reap the harvest which other generations have sown. Thus the Jews of our Lord's time, "filling up the measure of their fathers," received the recompense which was due to the accumulated

sins of many generations. The consequences of national sin committed by former generations may, however, be averted or mitigated by the repentance and entreaties of a succeeding generation. Daniel, in the name of the children of Israel, confessed with shame and grief the sins of their fathers, and implored forgiveness; and an angel was sent to assure him that soon their captivity should cease, and they be restored to the land from which they had been driven. The people of Nineveh clothed themselves in sack-cloth and cried mightily to God when they heard their doom from the lips of Jonah, and God was graciously pleased to suspend the punishment which centuries of crime had provoked.

Sometimes God afflicts a nation in order to discipline and prepare it for some noble mission. He shakes the torch that it may blaze the brighter; he mows the grass that it may grow the greener; he rocks the tree that it may strike its roots the deeper.

Brother, you may live in time of national depression, when oftentimes the corrupt and the fraudulent have the reins of power; when labor is unremunerative and discontent abroad; you may have no conscious fault, and yet your own individual lot may be one of perplexity and sorrow; but be steadfast, be patient, hold fast your integrity, and by and by, upon "a sea of glass mingled with fire," you will find occasion to swell with countless myriads the song: "Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints!" "Remember David and all his afflictions," and yet it was this same David who exclaimed, "Thy righteousness is like the great mountains!" it was this same David who saw the righteousness of God running through the universe, branching forth in every direction and overlooking all things.

But there are other points of resemblance between the

righteousness of God and the great mountains. The mountains are essential to the rendering of our globe the beautiful and comfortable habitation which it is. Uproot the Andes, and the valley of the Amazon would become a burning desert or an inland sea; remove the Alps, and Southern Europe would at once lose its attractive landscapes and productive plains. The mountains arrest the currents of cool air and condense them into clouds, and thus give the refreshing showers which temper the atmosphere, and replenish the springs, and beautify the fields, and swell and mature the harvests. In the heart of the mountains are found the metals so necessary to modern civilization. A thousand blessings flow to us from "the chief things of the ancient mountains and the precious things of the lasting hills."

The righteousness of God, like the great mountains, is a source of innumerable blessings. It is as indispensable as any of his perfections to the welfare of the universe. What to us would be his wisdom, what his omnipotence, what his love, if unattended by inviolable rectitude? The thought of an unrighteous Deity could only fill our minds with terror and dismay. It would dry up every fountain of peace, it would blight every blossom of love, it would render impossible the fruits of holiness, and yield nothing but the hollowness of the fruit of "the vine of Sodom." It is an essential element in the happiness of earth and heaven that unto our God "belongeth righteousness." Hushed would be every harp in glory if it could not vibrate to the song, "Thou only art holy." It is because he is righteous that we know he will exact of us no more than is compatible with our fallen state; it is because he is righteous that we know he will have respect to the atonement of his Son, and remit our sins when we exercise faith in Christ; it is because he is righteous that we know that he will not forget his covenant, but

will protect and guide his people to the end of time. No wonder that David cried: "I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only. My tongue also shall talk of thy righteousness all the day long."

Mountains are often the defense of kingdoms and refuge of the oppressed. The independence of Switzerland has been due no doubt in part to the lofty mountains which surround it. A few mountain passes, bravely defended by inferior numbers, have often turned the invader's foot from a nation's soil. The caves of mountains were the resort of the Israelites when harassed by their enemies. David found refuge in them when persecuted by Saul. They were hiding-places for the Waldenses when pursued by the cruel minions of apostate Rome.

The righteousness of God is also a bulwark of strength and the sanctuary of the weak. It may be that in serving God our course is condemned and our motives misconstrued; we faint and are ready to halt; but courage and fortitude revive when we think of the righteousness of God. A voice is heard saying: "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass; and he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday."

It may be that our integrity subjects us to poverty, and withholds from us the ease and enjoyment so coveted by men; we are in danger of being overtaken by discontent; but in the midst of our peril we find a sure retreat in the righteousness of God. Fleeing to his promises, we rejoice in hope, and sing to ourselves, "God is not unrighteous to forget our work and labor of love." It was the righteousness of God which helped to make the heroes of whom we read in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Their faith took hold of the fact "that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." That God

“will render to every man according to his deeds, to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life,” was to them a rocky fastness, a mountain stronghold, from which no device or threat of enemy could drive them.

The mountains suggest the idea of perpetuity. The works of man decay—his haughty palaces crumble into dust, his mighty cities are swept by the besom of destruction; but the hills of God stand immovable from age to age, their roots as strong and their brows as calm as when they were beheld by patriarchs of old. As emblematic of the righteousness of God, their stability speaks of its unchangeableness. And accordingly we hear the psalmist declaring, “Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness.” That God is unalterably pure; that in the remotest cycles of eternity he will be actuated by the principles of equity and truth; that never for once will he deviate from the law of right—this to me is full of the deepest comfort. I can look forward to the future with a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory. I can anticipate the years that are unending with an exultation and delight that has no alloy. “His righteousness endureth forever.” Never will he act toward me in any way but what is consistent with the strictest rectitude. Never will he inflict upon me the slightest injustice. “The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed,” he says, “but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed.”

The mountains are contemplated with different emotions according to the light in which they are viewed. I have seen them at midnight, when few stars shone in the sky, and they looked dark and dreary, and excited no feeling but one of sadness and melancholy; and I have seen them again when bathed in the light of the moon, and while here and there deep shadows were visible, yet a mild glory rest-

ed upon their summits, which filled my soul with serenest peace; and I have seen them again when the monarch of day poured his rich beams upon their slopes, and I rejoiced at the panorama of forest and field, of garden and orchard, which they presented. And under what different aspects, and with what different feelings, is "the righteousness of God" contemplated by men. To the sinner, shrouded in nature's night, it is somber and cheerless, and only awakens thoughts which are painful and harrowing. There are others who, emerging from the darkness of sin, see "the righteousness of God" through the moonbeams of gospel promises, and to them it is partly robbed of its terrors and invested with garments of splendor. But to those on whom shines the light of the Divine countenance in all its clearness, "the righteousness of God" appears without a cloud, and the transcendent prospect it discloses evokes from them strains of adoring gratitude and praise.

The question for us to ponder in conclusion is this: In what way, with what feelings, do I regard "the righteousness of God?" Is it to me a source of apprehension or delight? Is it to me as Mount Sinai to the Jews in the wilderness—the mount of "blackness and darkness and tempest"—the mount of which it is written, "So terrible was the sight that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake?" Or, is it to me as Mount Zion to the pilgrim Israelite in after years, the mount of which he says, "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion?"

The fear or joy awakened by a consideration of the righteousness of God discloses to us our spiritual state—whether under condemnation, or whether reconciled to God.

SERMON XXV.

EVANESCENT GOODNESS.

“O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away.” (Hosea vi. 4.)

THE subject is evanescent goodness. Our first endeavor will be to identify the persons who have their prototypes in Ephraim and Judah.

I see no reason to doubt that reference is here made to those who have been converted. The “goodness” of Ephraim and Judah is not in appearance only, but is something real. There is a disposition on the part of some to question the previous piety of those who, after a brief profession of religion, relapse into ungodliness. But to deny their former sincerity and acceptance before God, simply because they now sin, is to place ourselves in direct conflict with the inspired word. Nothing is more clearly taught in Scripture than the fact that good men may fall into the grossest sins. And from examples given we observe, moreover, that they may pass from the one state to the other with the most surprising rapidity. David, walking in the soft moonlight on the roof of his palace, meditating on the grandeur and goodness of God, is an eminent saint; the next morning he is stained with crime, fallen from holiness, and obnoxious to the wrath of God. Elijah, standing on Carmel and putting to shame the false prophets of Baal, is a picture of moral heroism; the next day, as he flees from Jezebel, he is a picture of moral cowardice. Peter, confessing Jesus to be the Christ the Son of the living God, receives the benediction, “Blessed art thou, Simon-Bar-

jona ;" a few moments afterward, forgetful of his position, and presuming to rebuke the Saviour, he receives the reproof, "Get thee behind me Satan ; thou art an offense unto me." A good man in this life is always walking near treacherous quicksands and unsuspected precipices, and he needs to exercise the greatest sobriety and vigilance if he is to pursue his path in safety. It is on this account that so many admonitions are addressed to Christians by the sacred writers. "He will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints ; but let them not turn again unto folly." "When the righteous turneth from his righteousness and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby." "War a good warfare ; holding faith and a good conscience ; which some having put away, concerning faith have made shipwreck." "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

The persons represented by Ephraim and Judah have not only been converted, but have excited hopes of extreme usefulness. Their "goodness" has resembled "a morning cloud."

It is difficult for us perhaps to appreciate the force of this figure. We must transport ourselves to those Eastern countries where prolonged droughts are common, and where oftentimes for months the heavens give no rain. We must imagine such a drought. The soil has become hard in the sun, and the air is filled with dust. The fountains have ceased to flow, and where the streamlets rippled and flashed are empty channels with nothing but mocking stones. The grass is all wilted, and the flowers have faded ; the vineyards and orchards are casting their fruit, and the grain-fields, on which the life of thousands depends, are already sending up stalks crowned only with hollow chaff. How the hearts of the people faint at the prospect ! What anxiety is stamped upon their countenances ! How they pray and look to the heavens for the first token of coming rain !

At last, from a restless couch and troubled dreams they awake and look forth. Lo, in the west is the wished-for cloud! As they gaze on it it becomes larger, and they observe it deepening in its dusky hue. O the joy which now thrills their hearts! How their eyes glisten and their lips quiver as they think of the return of verdant meadows and singing streams, of harvests saved and life preserved! See them watching the cloud as it rolls onward! How they hail the first pattering rain-drops! With what trembling expectancy do they wait for the sight of the far-sweeping shower!

The persons portrayed in our text are likened to such a cloud. Soundly converted, they have given promise of great usefulness. It was thought that they would bless the moral wastes around them as the reviving rain the parched soil. There were those who rejoiced at their conversion in anticipation of seeing them swell many a dry channel with their newborn energy, and reclaim a scorched tract by their gentle, all-persuasive influence, and cause many a flower to bloom in unnoted corners by their timely sympathy, and start afresh many a tree of righteousness whose leaves had begun to wither and its unripe fruit to fall.

Ephraim and Judah stand for those who have not only been converted and have excited hopes of extensive usefulness, but have also been the means of accomplishing some good. Their "goodness" has been as "the early dew."

How refreshing and invigorating is the dew! You may have surveyed the landscape at the close of a long summer day, during which an unclouded sun poured its fierce rays upon field and forest, and you noticed that the grass had lost its moist beauty and the leaves their enameled brightness. But during the night, while you slept, the dew fell upon all the land; and in the morning when you went forth you saw that the spires of grass had regained their fresh-

ness, and the multitude of leaves were clothed with their former luster, and each plant and vine, and sprout and tree, seemed to smile with conscious gladness.

The persons described in the text have achieved results which may be compared to the early dew. They have brought joy to the heart of God. For years, perhaps, he had waited for their conversion; and when at last they bowed in penitence before him, acknowledging their sins, imploring his forgiveness, and yielding themselves unreservedly to his will, his delight was such as could only be measured by himself. They have given pleasure to the holy angels. Those exalted beings had grieved to observe their wickedness and to know their danger; and when they saw them restored to the Divine favor and made heirs to the heavenly inheritance, they gave expression to their gratification in harmonious and triumphant lays. They have also cheered the Church. It may be that they were converted in a community where the gospel had long been ineffective; the people of God had become disheartened at the prospect; but their faith was strengthened and their zeal rekindled by these additions to their ranks. More than this, others have been saved through their instrumentality. Sinners were so impressed with the change that was wrought in them, the high moral excellences which they had evidently attained, that they renounced their sins and sought with tears the same renewing grace. O the deep ecstasy, the soothing comfort, the lofty inspirations, the blessed purposes which, all silently and unconsciously, they have communicated! As the dew upon the mountains and in the valleys, refreshing the stately cedars and the lowly grass, so has been their influence in heaven and in earth, among angelic hosts and among the sons of men.

Ephraim and Judah, however, represent those who, notwithstanding their conversion, the hopes they have excited,

and the good they have accomplished, have failed to maintain their character and to pursue their usefulness. Their "goodness" has been "as a morning cloud, and as the early dew" which *goeth away*. You see their picture in the cloud which has come up in the time of drought and awoke the expectation of abundant rain, but after dispensing a few scattering drops on the parched fields, begins to break, and in the course of an hour has vanished from the sky. You see their picture in the dew which has imparted freshness to the face of nature, but quickly evaporates, leaving vegetation to look to other sources for supplies of moisture to withstand the heat of noon-tide and the fierce glance of the descending sun.

Are there any present who recognize themselves in Ephraim and Judah? Perchance there are. You were once converted. Of the reality of your conversion you had then no doubt. You have often doubted it since; but at that time you would as soon have thought of doubting your existence. What peace was yours! what hallowed joy! what deep, overflowing love! Do you not remember it? So marked and positive was the change that others were constrained to notice it. High hopes were entertained of your future; it was thought that you would yet stand among the foremost champions of the truth. The worn leaders of the Church rejoiced to think that when their hands grew stiff in death they could pass to you the banners which they had borne aloft so long and bravely; and already you were doing good. Your exemplary life, your tender, loving zeal, was awaking penitence and stimulating faith in many of your fellows. Alas, what a change has taken place! "How is the gold become dim!" From the shining pinnacle of virtue you have sunk again into the abyss of wickedness. You have discontinued the performance of your duties; you have ceased to be useful; and you

have lost your happiness. The calamity may have been sudden—the shivering of the green tree by the lightning-stroke of some strong temptation; or it may have been slow—the spoiling of leaf after leaf of the vigorous plant by the creeping mildew of some base desire. You are now a backslider; your name may still be on the church-register, but it is there by sufferance and not by right. O how sad is your condition! The wicked scorn you, and class you with the hypocrites; the righteous pity you, and pray for your salvation; and high above all, God regards you. Yes, though you have forsaken him, he has not forgotten you. The “morning cloud,” with the hopes it excited, and the “early dew,” with the good it accomplished, are still remembered. You occasion him many a soliloquy amid the glad harpings of angels and the rich anthems of the redeemed. It is one of these soliloquies which we have in our text. Would that it might penetrate your ear and soften the obduracy of your heart!

“O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away.”

Ponder this language; may it be used by the Divine Spirit to bring you to repentance!

It betrays disappointment. God expected something better from you. Your conversion and consistent conduct for some time subsequent to that event seemed to augur a future of progressive holiness and of increasing usefulness. It is true that God is omniscient, and as such foresaw from the first your declension, but it appears from Scripture that this omniscience does not prevent him from being affected by existing circumstances. When God created man he foresaw his fall, the universal depravity which would follow, and the redemption which would be effected by Christ; nevertheless, so offended was he by the wickedness of the

antediluvians, some two thousand years after, that "it repented him that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at the heart." His present feelings may be modified, but they are not absolutely controlled by his knowledge of the future. He may take pleasure in a saint while loving and obeying him, even though he may foresee that a time is coming when that saint will apostatize and perish; and he can be displeased and pained at the iniquity of one who has been his servant, even though he may know that there will yet be contrition and amendment. Think then of God; O backslider, of God as disappointed in you! Surely you must be lost to all sense of shame if this will not stir you. What would we think of the son who is undisturbed to know that his parent is disappointed in him? What would we think of the soldier who exhibits no concern on learning that his commander is disappointed in him? What would we think of the statesman who is utterly callous at the discovery that a whole nation is disappointed in him? And to what degradation must you have sunk when you can sit unmoved while knowing that the greatest, the wisest, the best, the most considerate Being in the universe is disappointed in you? O the sigh which you evoke from the bosom of the Infinite! Can you not catch it in the closing words of this soliloquy: "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew *it goeth away.*"

The language indicates perplexity. "What shall I do unto thee?" God represents himself as unable to devise any further expedient to save you. He has exhausted all the resources of his infinite wisdom to consummate a plan by which you may be saved. That plan is the atonement of his Son. You have only to renounce your sins and to trust implicitly in that atonement in order to be saved. It is the

only plan available in your case. God can be "just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." The atonement is the one channel through which his mercy can stream down to the sons of men. Satisfying the demands of his administrative justice, it enables him to extend forgiveness without detriment to his character or injury to his moral government. The atonement was immeasurably costly. It necessitated an expenditure of love and suffering such as no finite mind is capable of conceiving. This, then, is the plan by which you can alone be saved. You have already tried it and proved its efficacy; how unwise, how ungrateful in you to abandon it! You are like the man who, imprisoned in a burning building, has thrust aside the only ladder that can save him, and which, at the risk of life, and with shouts of exultant joy, friends have placed within his reach. You are like the man who, drowning in the roaring deep, has flung away the one stout rope which loving hands have thrown him, and now wrestles vainly with the fierce, tumultuous waves. Thank God that you have not yet perished! But if ever you are saved it will be by faith in that atonement which you have despised. There is no other way by which you can escape the consequences of your sins and be restored to Divine favor. The plan is unique, perfect, inconceivably precious, and universally effective. God can contrive no other. Like the tide which rolls in from ocean's heart with solemn, plaintive voice, uttering the same sad monotone from generation to generation, so through all time there comes from the unfathomable depths of the Divine counsels the moan which tells of the baffled effort to discover other expedient to save a sinner: "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee?"

The language is expressive of solicitude. "What shall I do unto thee?" God is anxious for your salvation. He

has no pleasure in the punishment of the wicked. He would rejoice, for your sake, to see you turn from the error of your ways. He knows the value of this heaven which you will forfeit and the terrors of this hell which you will endure if you persist in your disobedience and impenitence. He would not have you go down to the regions of everlasting misery; he would not have you augment the number of the damned; he would have you dwell with himself in light; he would have you "drink of the river of his pleasures;" he would deliver you from all guilt, from sin and sorrow, from pain and death. But if he is to save you there must be continual consent and coöperation of your own will. He has endowed you with the power of moral choice. This proud prerogative he will not invade. He will persuade, but he will not compel you to obedience; he will help, but he will not force you to repent. You have resisted his appeals, you have refused his aid. O with what intense solicitude does he regard you! As he recalls the past, when you were his servant and rejoicing in the hope of heaven, and as he beholds you now in your indifference to his goodness, and in your opposition to his laws, nearing each day—in spite of all his remonstrances and entreaties—the dread line which once crossed will forever separate you from his smile, he exclaims, with a pathos which no human tongue can employ: "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee?"

A few remarks in conclusion. How should we esteem and venerate this Being who, notwithstanding his sublime and unapproachable majesty, manifests such interest in the welfare of our race! Says the psalmist: "The Lord is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens. Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high, who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven and in the earth?" How should we rejoice that mercy is

one of his attributes! Says the psalmist again: "O praise the Lord, all ye nations; praise him, all ye people. For his merciful kindness is great toward us, and the truth of the Lord endureth forever. Praise ye the Lord."

How should we endeavor not to grieve him with our sins! It should be to us a source of remorse and anguish to have him complain of us, "Your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away." How promptly and how penitently should we seek his forgiveness when we have sinned against him!

My backslidden brother, my erring sister, do not, I beseech you, continue in sin from a sense of shame or from a feeling of despair. It is true you have displeased God; but you only increase his disappointment, you only add as it were to his perplexity, you only intensify his solicitude, by refusing to repent. Says the prophet: "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord; say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously." And for your encouragement he represents God as saying: "I will heal their backsliding; I will love them freely; I will be as the dew unto Israel; he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon."

THE END.

